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THE HOUSE OF HALLIWELL.

BY MRS. HENRY WOOD, AUTHOR OF "EAST LYNNE."

CHAPTER XI.

A WEDDING.

AGAIN a few years went on at Seaford—such a few!—and Mrs. Halliwell found she was not likely to make an old woman. The time was coming that she must die. She thought it was not quite so near: her daughters that it was not near at all. She kept up very well, and they saw no danger.

One evening she was sitting on the sofa, with her feet up, near the open window, for she loved the air of the early summer; Hester and Mary were working, and Lucy reading aloud, when Mrs. Halliwell signed to the latter to cease. "Someone is coming towards our house," she said, "like a traveller; for surely that is a truck of luggage following."

"A lady in deep mourning," added Mary, looking up. "Yes, she is making direct for our house. Who can it be?"

"Mamma," cried Hester, hastily, "be prepared. I fear—you will not be alarmed."

"Hester, you know that I suffer nothing to alarm me. Speak out."

"I fear it is Aunt Copp; in widow's weeds."

Aunt Copp it proved to be. She came in, leaving Phœby to take care of the luggage, and sat down amidst them without a word. Throwing back her crape veil, she pointed with her two hands towards her full muslin cap and burst into tears.

"Dear Aunt Copp," cried Lucy, crying too, as she took her hands, "we see it all. When did it happen?"

"I don't know that I can tell you," she answered after relieving herself by copious sobs. "And to think that Sam never saw his poor dear father before he went! He's second mate now."

"When did it happen?" they inquired. "When we last heard, you were at Calcutta."

"Mind you, I knew the voyage would prove unlucky," said Aunt Copp, who went from one piece of news to another, in spite of her grief, and was certainly not one to bury it in silence; "for the very night after we started for home, a nasty great hulky-bulky ship came along, without lights, and stove in our bulwarks, took off the bowsprit, and ripped up the boats, and we had to put back to Sauger Roads for repair. But I said to the Captain, 'You'll see: this turn will be a bad one.' And sure enough it was. Ah, me!"

"Do not tell us about it just yet, if it pains you, Aunt Copp," said Mary.

"Oh, I'll tell you. It—is that Mary?" she demanded, taking the first good look at her. "I can tell you all what—she's the flower of the flock. I never saw so pretty a girl."

Mary was very pretty, with her dark silky hair, her rich blue eyes, and her delicate face, that was, just now, blushing crimson.

"A graceful, elegant girl as ever I saw," continued Aunt Copp. "You must be nineteen, now."

"Just nineteen," murmured Mary, who was blushing still. "But will you not tell us, Aunt Copp—if not too painful?"

"There's not much to tell, my dear. Only that the voyage was disastrous from beginning to end. A fever broke out after our second starting; the chief mate and some of the crew died, rendering us short of hands. Then we had dreadful weather, nothing but storms and hurricanes; and my poor husband was completely worn out with fatigue, which may have rendered him more likely to take illness. We touched at the Cape; a fever was raging there; not the same sort which had attacked the ship: my husband had escaped the first, but this he caught. When we sailed away from the Cape he was sickening for it, and in a week's time, girls—oh, it's a mournful thing to tell you!—his poor dear body was sewn up, and, at sundown, plunged into the sea. I hope it escaped those horrid sharks; but"—lowering her voice to a whisper—"one was following the vessel."

"Aunt Copp," shuddered Mary, "why could you not have brought it home to be buried on land? He could have lain by poor papa."

"Bless your ignorant heart, child, we can't keep the dead aboard ship. The sailors would jump into the sea first, and swim away, on the chance of being picked up. Our second mate—a very nice young fellow, who had acted as first since the chief mate went off—read the service over his poor body, so it's a consolation to think he had Christian burial. And he was a good man," earnestly added Aunt Copp, "for he never ill-treated one of his sailors in his life, so I am not afraid but what he is happy."

"When did you land?" asked Mrs. Halliwell.

"Only just. Our second mate brought the ship home *well*; my poor old Captain could not have done it better. It's a great feather in his cap, and I have not forgotten to mention it in his certificate.

I have a world of business before me. So as soon as I landed, after rigging myself in my new costume, which I feel most wretched in, and can't bear the sight of, I came right off to London to do it, taking you on the road, for a day or two, before I get there."

"I thought you were come for a long stay, Aunt Copp. There seemed a great deal of luggage."

"I never travel without plenty of luggage; there's no knowing what one may want. Some of it is for you. Dresses, and shawls, and I don't know what all, from Jane Pepper."

"Tell me about her," sighed Mrs. Halliwell.

"Well, I don't want to shock you, but unless Jane chooses to take heart, she'll just cry herself to death."

"Cry herself to death!" uttered Mrs. Halliwell.

"She cries morning, noon, and night. At least she did for the last fortnight of my stay there. All the children are gone."

"All!"

"All three; they have followed the other two. Little sickly things they were. The one died before I got to Calcutta, and the two others while I was there. So that makes all five gone. Of course Jane frets herself into shreds over it, and to reason with her was useless. 'Five such darling children,' she kept harping upon, 'and all gone.' 'Your crying won't mend it, Jane,' I said, and with that she set on and cried the more. So I went to her husband. 'Captain Pepper,' I said (by the way, he's getting on rapidly, and expects soon to have his majority), 'do you want to bury Jane?'

"'To bury her!' he echoed, staring at me, 'what do you mean, Aunt Copp?'—for, you see, that's what he has taken to call me, through hearing Jane.

"'Why, she'll just fret and stew herself into her grave at the rate she is going on,' I answered. 'Now you had better persuade her to come with us to England. I and Captain Copp will take good care of her on the voyage' (little thinking, you know, my dears, what a one we were going to have), 'and it will be change of scene and change of air. She'll stop with her mother and sisters, and when she's tired of them, and her health is strong, she can come back to you. Now, Captain, you must just worry her till she consents, for it's the only thing.'

"'I'll try and persuade her, Aunt Copp,' said he. 'I think a voyage to England would do her good, and I have told her so.' Well, my dears, he could do nothing with her, any more than I could. Jane would not leave him: and my belief is, that though he talked to her before me, he just stopped when my back was turned. They are as fond of each other, are those two, as they were the day they married, which, as I represented to them, was perfectly unreasonable and ridiculous. However, the upshot was, that Jane let us sail without her, and I don't believe you'll get her over to Europe at all, unless he can obtain leave and come with her. So there."

"How is she looking, Rebecca?" asked Mrs. Halliwell.

"As thin as a herring. And she has lost one of her front teeth, and her face is drawn and yellow. She looks ten years older than Hester."

"Oh, Aunt Copp!" exclaimed Hester.

"She does. I don't think the climate agrees with her. And then her children have come so quickly."

"And gone again," sighed Mrs. Halliwell.

"Oh, well," said Aunt Copp, "if she could only get over the grief, the poor little things are better off."

"How is Sam?"

"I suppose he's all right: I had a letter from him when I landed at Liverpool, which was waiting there. He has gone to the Bermudas."

"I hope you are left comfortably off, Rebecca," said Mrs. Halliwell.

"Middling. It might be better and it might be worse. When things are squared up, I shall have about what the East India Company allow you—£200 a year, which, of course, will be Sam's after me. Sam has some in a lump, which I daresay he'll make ducks and drakes of, as soon as he touches it. Do you know," added Aunt Copp, peering at her sister-in-law, "you are not looking well? Very ill, I think."

"I cannot boast much, Rebecca."

"And now, girls, guess where I went as I came up from Liverpool. I took somebody in my way."

"The Halliwells at Middlebury, perhaps."

"No. Alfred. I wanted to see an old shipmate of the poor Captain's, who lives within a few miles of Chelson, so I thought I might as well go on, and have a look at them."

"Are they quite well?"

"Nothing to boast of. Alfred has a deal to do, and is badly paid, and his wife has scarcely got over her last illness. At the pace they are going, they will have a score or two of children, I should say. Worse than Jane."

"How do you like her, Rebecca?"

"Pretty well. She does not seem to be a first-rate manager, and there's no regularity in the house, but then there's only one servant for everything, children and baby and all. I should think the confusion must drive the parson wild at sermon writing time. Mabel had a sister stopping with her for a day or two."

"Which one?" asked Hester. "Matilda or Fanny?"

"Neither. They called her Amy. A meek-tempered, soft-headed girl as ever I saw; nothing to say for herself."

"Then she is not like Hester's description of Matilda and Fanny," laughed Lucy.

"I say, Hester," resumed Aunt Copp, going to another theme, "have you heard anything of that booby yet?"

"What booby?" exclaimed Hester.

"Your parson."

A deep flush rose to Hester's face. "No," she whispered. "Nothing."

"I hope you never will, for he was not worth it. And some of you ridiculed my cards!"

"Aunt Copp," broke in Mary, "have you told anyone's fortune lately?"

"Child," said Aunt Copp, solemnly, "I have never told one since. I never will again."

"Since when?"

"That time. Before your papa died."

Somehow, that night, Hester could not sleep. Since Mrs. Halliwell grew worse, she had occupied a small bed in her room, and she slipped quietly out of it, and throwing on a dressing-gown, went into the corridor. It was a lovely night. The moon, nearly at the full, was riding, clear and bright, in the dark blue sky, and Hester stood at the window, looking out. She was thinking over many things: the passage of life seemed dark for their family just then. Her mother's decay, her sister Jane's sorrow, her brother's struggles, Captain Copp's death, and—it *would* mix with the rest—doubts of the fate of George Archer. Hester's tears came, and flowed silently. "But—God is over all," she murmured, looking up at the fair expanse of sky; "as He permits it, it *must* be right." Suddenly she started and listened: was that her mother calling to her in a faint voice? Hester glided silently in again: she was not sure.

"Hester—Hester—child—where—are—you?"

"Dearest mamma, what is the matter? You cannot breathe."

"I am worse, child;" but there was still a pause between every word. "Do not alarm the house. Call Phoeby only, and let her go for Mr. Davis."

Hester did not alarm the house, but she woke them quietly. Phoeby was despatched for Mr. Davis.

It was early morning when he came, and in the evening of that same day, Mrs. Halliwell died.

"What a mercy that I was here!" ejaculated Aunt Copp. "My poor girls, I'll stop with you till after the funeral, and then be off to London, get over my business, and come back to you."

"Do not put yourself out of the way to return to us, Aunt Copp," said Hester, for she had a dim idea that they should manage better without her than with her; but her sorrow was too great just then to dwell upon trifles.

Alfred came to the funeral, and Mr. Halliwell of Middlebury. The mournful duties were gone through, and the business duties. It had been Mrs. Halliwell's wish that her daughters should remain in the house for a year after her death, for which she had provided.

They would each then have £500, and alas! must look out for themselves, and do the best they could in life.

Aunt Copp was as good as her word, and she returned to them on the conclusion of her business in town, and a regular worry she proved to be. Desperately bustling and active, she interfered in everything. Not a bit of crape could they begin to hem, but Aunt Copp would clap on her tortoiseshell spectacles, go peering at it, and find some fault. It was not cut straight, or it was begun at the wrong end, or the hem was not broad enough, and she would whisk it out of their hands, draw out the stitches at one pull, and make them begin it according to her own notions. Not a thing could Hester steal into the kitchen to do, leaving her safe, as she hoped, with Lucy and Mary, but in five minutes she had ferreted her out. Hester was putting too much stuffing in the duck, and Phœby had overboiled the onions; or—*that* was not enough jam for the roly-pudding; and she'd have no salt put in the crust; she hated salt. This was enough to provoke Hester, who was a most efficient seamstress and housewife, but she had a calm, patient temper, and bore with it. Phœby put up with it less equably: Aunt Copp was the worry of her life; and she went one day to Hester's bedroom in desperation to say that if Mrs. Copp stayed, she should go.

Three months of it they had, and then Aunt Copp departed. Mary had been invited to visit Mr. and Mrs. Halliwell at Middlebury, so her aunt undertook to convey her there, on her way to Liverpool, where she intended to establish her home.

Mary Halliwell's stay at Middlebury lengthened into winter, and then she wrote to say they must not expect her till spring. However, a few days after the receipt of this letter by Hester, they were surprised by her arrival with Mr. Halliwell.

"Do you know why I have brought her to Seaford?" asked the latter.

"Because you were tired of her," said Hester; "which I thought you must have been, weeks ago."

"Not exactly that. Miss Mary has been engaging herself to take somebody else's name."

Hester and Lucy were too surprised to speak. Mary stood with her eyes cast down and her cheeks crimson.

"And as I look upon you, Hester, somewhat in the light of a guardian to her," proceeded Mr. Halliwell, "I thought it my duty to come and lay the case before you, ere it went any further. Mary—where's she gone?"

Mary had escaped from the room. Hester sat down with a sigh. "There seems nothing but trouble," she breathed. "Is it a very unsuitable engagement?"

"Pray, my dear, who said it was unsuitable at all?" smiled Mr. Halliwell.

Hester considered. "I believe I inferred so from your manner—and Mary's."

"She is gone, so I'll speak out, but I don't foster her vanity by saying it before her. He is one of the nicest young fellows that ever lived; and she could not have chosen better, if she had had the pick of all Middlebury."

"How you have relieved me," exclaimed Hester. "Who is it?"

"Dr. Goring."

"A physician?"

"No, my dear," laughed Mr. Halliwell; "he is only a general practitioner, but we call them all doctors down with us. If I had a daughter, I don't know anyone I would sooner give her to than to young Goring. And I prove myself particularly disinterested in saying this, for someone else wanted Mary."

"Who?" questioned Hester.

"My son, poor Tom. She has given his heart a twinge; not purposely, for I never saw a girl with less coquetry in my life. She is an admirable girl, Hester."

"I trust she is," answered Hester, with pride.

"Tom soon found he should have no chance, so he drew in and set-to to cure himself of his love fever. And as he went off it, Goring went into it. She did not look with a cool eye on *him*. He is a most attractive man, as you will soon see. He is here."

"Here!"

"He travelled with us, and is stopping at the Seaford Arms. I came on to make all straight for him, and he was to follow."

"Oh, dear!" cried Hester.

"You need not say 'oh, dear,'" laughed Mr. Halliwell. "He has nothing formidable about him: the pleasantest young man you ever spoke to."

"Has he a good income?" inquired Hester.

"A very good one. He has succeeded to an excellent practice in Middlebury. Take it altogether, Hester, it is a very desirable match for Mary. If—there he is." Hester looked from the window, and saw someone very good-looking coming down the opposite road.

Phoeby opened the door, and Dr. Goring (we may as well call him so as the Middlebury people) entered. A tall, slender, gentlemanly young man, with a sunny countenance and a remarkably pleasant voice and manner. Hester did not wonder at Mary's having fallen in love with him; she was ready to do so herself. He wanted the marriage to take place without delay.

"That cannot be," said Hester. "Her mother has only been dead six months."

"But just consider," argued Dr. Goring, laughing and looking as if he did not believe that to be an insuperable bar. "Some of my patients object to me because I am a bachelor. I assure you, Miss Halliwell, it is essential to my professional interests that I marry."

"We so loved our dear mother: all Seaford so respected her. No, Dr. Goring; decidedly no. The very day after the first year's

mourning shall be up, then you may have Mary. I scarcely think she would herself wish it to take place earlier."

"But I do," he said.

"Do not urge it, Dr. Goring. Indeed, I cannot consent. I feel that it would not be right; not seemly."

So Dr. Goring and Mr. Halliwell went back to Middlebury, and the wedding was fixed to take place in June. Mary, of course, remained at home, busy enough with her preparations. Dr. Goring paid them a flying visit now and then, and the period drew near.

What was their astonishment, a few days previous to it, to see Aunt Copp arrive! Hester had incautiously written her word of the progress of affairs, and instead of receiving an answer, wishing Mary good luck, or something of that sort, who should come but Aunt Copp herself, by the morning mail, to be followed, in the course of the day, by a sea-chest, two hair trunks, and two bandboxes, the mail having refused to carry them. Hester and Lucy were petrified.

"Now, what do you three girls think of yourselves?" she began. "Did you ever hear of a young girl being married from a house without a matron in it to countenance her?"

The idea had really not occurred to Hester. Steady and sedate, and turned thirty years, she believed herself a proper guide and protector to Mary, and ventured to hint as much to her aunt.

"Quite false ideas," called out Aunt Copp. "Never was such a thing heard of, I tell you, as a young lass going out of a house where there was no married woman in it. For my part, I question if such a wedding would stand good. Why, you would have been the talk for miles round. And Mary is such a child."

"I am twenty, Aunt Copp," interrupted Mary.

"Twenty!" scornfully ejaculated Aunt Copp. "So was I twenty, when I married my poor dead-and-gone sailor husband, and a precious goose he found me. I was one-and-twenty when my darling boy was born (I had a letter from him last week, girls, and he's made first mate now, through the other one going off with yellow fever; and was beating about in a calm in the Pacific, which gave him time to write), and a precious goose of a mother *he* found me, the innocent baby! So don't boast to me of your twenty years; go and tell it to the marines. What should three girls know about the management necessary at a wedding? Have you thought to order the cake?"

"Oh, yes, we have done that."

"And to get cards printed?"

"And that also."

"And the style of setting out the breakfast? Have you discussed that?"

"Not yet."

"I thought so," groaned Aunt Copp. "No ship-shape arrangements beforehand, no consultations, no nothing. A pretty muddle you'll be in when the morning comes! be leaving the dressing of the

table to Phoeby, or some such carelessness. She'll put the fowls at the side, and the custards round with the glasses, for of all incapable headpieces, that woman's is the worst. Oh! if the poor Major could only look up from his grave and witness this state of things! or your dear mamma! Of course you'll have custards?"

"If you think it necessary, Aunt Copp," said Hester; "but we do not wish any needless show or expense. Besides the clergyman and his wife, and two or three more friends, there will only be ourselves and Alfred."

"Why, you have never gone and sent for Alfred!" snapped Aunt Copp. It was not that she was really ill-tempered, but her way of snapping people up had grown upon her worse than ever.

"Alfred is to marry me, Aunt Copp," said Mary.

"Lord help ye for three thoughtless simpletons—and him for another! A poor fellow, whose living is only a hundred and seventy-five pounds a year, fees included, and whose outgoings take it half off pretty near, before he can say a shilling of it is his own, and his wife sick, and his children coming on as thick as blackberries, to be dragged across the country, a hundred miles, to marry a child! It will be four pounds out of his pocket."

"It will not be out of *his* pocket, Aunt Copp," interrupted Lucy in a nettled tone; "we have taken care of that." But Aunt Copp only groaned for answer: she never would allow that they did anything right.

"And pray, Miss Lucy, is there anything of the sort agate for you?" she went on.

"Why, Aunt Copp!" ejaculated Lucy, laughing and blushing. "Of course not."

"I don't see any 'of course' in the matter. If Hester is fated to live and die an old maid, that's no reason why you should. I advise you to set about looking out for a suitable husband. If you have not Mary's beauty, you are a likely-looking, lady-like girl, and you'll never see seven-and-twenty again. Keep your weather eye open, and—dear me! the very thing!"

This concluding exclamation, in a changed tone of voice, as if Aunt Copp had just recollected something, caused them to look at her.

"I wish to goodness I knew where he was bound to! But, you see, when I got out, he went on in the mail."

"What is it you are talking of, Aunt Copp?"

"Such a charming gentleman! He was my fellow-passenger. Where he came from, I cannot tell you, for he was in the mail when I got in. I should think, by his conversation, he was a Londoner, and had been down to our part of the country. A fine man as you'd wish to see, six foot high, with a full blue eye, and a colour like a red cabbage. He told me he was looking out for a wife, and had come out, travelling, to find one, and meant to marry as soon as he

had found her. It would be the very thing for Lucy! I declare, if he were within reasonable distance, I'd send my card, and ask him to tea. I know I should get him for you, Lucy."

"Really, Aunt Copp, you are growing old and ridiculous," responded Lucy, uncertain whether to laugh or be angry.

"Old, am I! ridiculous, am I!" bridled Aunt Copp, in a fury; "everybody doesn't think so. Why, he wanted to try it on with me, I could see he did, a handsome man like him, and not a day more than five or six-and-thirty. He did, Miss Lucy, and you need not begin grinning there. We had the mail to ourselves, or as good, for the fat farmer who took up the opposite seat nearly from side to side was snoring all night. Very polite indeed he was, and very respectful, quite the gentleman in his manners, and would keep on kissing my hand. But I volunteered to tell him I had been married once, which I had found quite enough, and I did not purpose taking another, preferring to remain my own mistress, besides having a dear son, who was chief officer of a splendid two-decker, now becalmed in the Pacific (unless the wind should have got up since), and that I had no love to spare from my boy for the best second husband that could offer. Whereupon my gentleman turned sulky and gathered himself up in his corner. Old, am I? Forty-five's old, is it? Just put that window up, Mary. I'm hot."

So they had to endure Aunt Copp's company, and make the best of it. But even before Mary's wedding morning arrived, and her handsome young husband came and took her away, she had tried their patience severely.

CHAPTER XII.

CAPTAIN KERLETON.

VERY dull they felt the day after the wedding, Friday. Aunt Copp was setting things to rights in the house and worrying Phoeby in the kitchen, while Hester and Lucy seemed scarcely to know what to do with themselves. Their brother had left them early in the morning, wishing to get home before Saturday. After dinner, Lucy proposed a walk, and Aunt Copp acquiesced.

"Let us go and look at the haymaking," she said. "The smell of it, coming in here at the windows, puts me in mind of my young days, when I tumbled over the haycocks with the best of them."

Accordingly, they went into the hayfield, one rented by Mr. Williams, the Rector. He was there with his wife and little boys, at work in his shirt-sleeves. "That's right, young ladies," he called out, when he saw them, "come and scatter the hay about: the more it's open to the sun, the better, this hot afternoon. A pleasant, rural scene this, ma'am"—to Aunt Copp.

"Yes, sir. I was telling the girls that the smell made me believe

myself young again. I have not been in the way of it much, Mr. Williams, since I settled in life; what with living in seaport towns, where one's nose meets with nothing but tar and pitch, and going voyages with my husband, where one scents nothing but salt brine, and never sees a field for months. There, Hester!"

Aunt Copp, with her great strong arms, had seized a whole haycock, and dashed it over Hester. That was the commencement of the sport. They laughed, and screamed, and smothered each other in hay, Mrs. Williams and Lucy being foremost in the fray.

After two hours' fun, they were leaving the field, tired, heated and thirsty, when Aunt Copp, who had rushed up to a haycock, some few of which were left intact near the entrance, intending to favour Hester and Lucy with a parting salute from behind, gave a loud scream, which caused them to look round.

Well done, Aunt Copp! Instead of securing the mound of hay, her arms had entangled themselves round the neck of a gentleman, who had stretched himself to recline on the off-side of it, and had fallen into a doze.

"Good heavens above!" ejaculated Aunt Copp. "I beg your pardon, sir. I thought I was laying hold of nothing but the haycock."

"No offence, ma'am. I wish you'd put your arms there again. Ah, my dear regretted fellow-traveller, is it you! How *do* you find yourself by this time? I have been up and down the country ever since. I forgot, you must know, the name of the place where you stopped, so I thought I'd take all the stopping places of the mail, one by one, which I did, and came here in rotation this afternoon, intending to pay my respects to you. What two delightful ladies!"

"They are my nieces," returned Aunt Copp. "Miss Halliwell and Miss Lucy Halliwell."

"And I am Captain Kerleton—if you will allow me to introduce myself—formerly serving with my regiment in India; but the duty did not agree with me, so I sold out. Would this little spot be a pleasant part of the country to stop in for a week or two, think you?"

"Very," cried Aunt Copp, impressively. "And the Seaford Arms is an excellent inn."

"Then I'm off for it. Which is the road?"

"There," she replied, pointing in the direction of the village, "about five minutes' walk. But won't you step in with us, and take a cup of tea? It will refresh you this hot afternoon. Our house is close by. Girls," she added, seizing a minute to whisper to them as they walked on, for the stranger eagerly accepted the invitation, "this is the gentleman I told you of, the one in the mail, you know, who wants a wife. So look out, Lucy."

Lucy felt annoyed, and naturally. She was a most retiring-minded girl, and had a genuine horror of thrusting herself forward to attract

the notice of gentlemen. Hester was even more displeased. She thought it exceedingly wrong of her aunt to introduce a stranger to their home in that unceremonious manner. What did she know of Captain Kerleton? He might be an adventurer, a swindler, for all she could tell to the contrary. As it afterwards turned out, he *was* a gentleman, of good family and fortune, but that was no thanks to Aunt Copp's prudence. The fact was, Mrs. Copp had been connected with seafaring people so long that she had imbibed a touch of their free-and-easy notions, and had become almost as open-hearted in her manners as her late husband, the merchant-captain.

Captain Kerleton took up his residence at the Seaford Arms, and a gay time of it ensued. The whole neighbourhood undertook to patronise him, especially the houses which contained grown-up daughters, for his fortune, really a good one, report considerably magnified. Pic-nic parties, evening parties, hay-making parties, followed close upon each other, some of which owed Aunt Copp for the projector; none remembered the quiet village ever to have been so gay. Captain Kerleton did his utmost to render himself agreeable: would run his head off to fetch and carry at any lady's whim; dance himself lame and sing himself hoarse; and when once he *was* set on to dance and sing there was no stopping him. On the whole, Hester liked his manners, and the Seaford Arms gave a pleasant account of his quiet, gentlemanly habits; but there was one trick of his which was a strange one—that of *staring*. He would sometimes be seized with one of these staring fits, and then he would sit in his chair, and look someone straight in the face for a quarter of an hour together, and never once move his eyes. Sometimes it would be Aunt Copp, sometimes Hester, sometimes Lucy, and sometimes others; it seemed to be all the same to the Captain. Once it was Phœby. He had gone into the kitchen to ask her to brush his coat, which had accidentally acquired some dust, and there he sat himself down and stared at Phœby, till the girl grew so confused that she sidled out of the kitchen and left him to it, bolting herself in the back-house.

One morning they were seated at the open window of their front parlour, busy over some shirts and bands for Alfred (whose poor wife had enough to do with her children and her household cares without thinking of new shirts and bands for the parson), and were conversing, sadly enough, of their future prospects, which were anything but distinct, when some scarlet object came looming up the opposite road. Lucy saw it first, and they all looked up through the closed Venetian blinds. The sun shone on it, hot and bright, and the scarlet was intermingled with something that glittered like gold, and dazzled the sight.

"Goodness heart alive!" uttered Aunt Copp, after a puzzled gaze through her spectacles, "if it is not Captain Kerleton in his regimentals!"

They had never seen the Captain in his regimentals, and a very imposing sight it was. He detected them at the window, and walked straight up to it.

"Good morning, ladies," he said, putting his face close to the blind. "Is not this a blazing day?"

"Something else looks blazing, I think, Captain," cried Aunt Copp. "We did not know you."

"You mean me, in my regimentals," returned the Captain; "they came down last night. I should have had them before, but the servants at home made a mistake, and sent my brother's. He is in Scotland—gone to look after his property—or it would not have happened. What are you working at so attentively, Miss Lucy?"

"I am stitching a wristband, Captain Kerleton."

"Not for me, Miss Lucy?"

"No," laughed Lucy. "For my brother."

"Perhaps the time may come, Miss Lucy, when you will stitch mine."

Aunt Copp gave a significant cough, and Lucy, after a surprised glance upwards, blushed deeply, and went on fast with her stitching.

"Will you walk in, Captain?" said Mrs. Copp. "You will find the front door open."

"Not this morning," replied the Captain. "I only came to bring this—if you'll please to open the blind."

Aunt Copp drew open the half of the Venetian blind, and the Captain thrust in a small parcel, tied up in white paper, turning short away as soon as she had it in her hands. There was no direction, and Aunt Copp held it in uncertainty.

"Captain Kerleton," she called after him, "what's this for? Is it to be opened?"

"Opened, of course," answered the Captain, whirling his head round to speak, his legs striding away all the while: "I did not bring it for anything else."

What should be in this parcel but a green-and-gold book and a small, beautifully enamelled watch, in a case. They opened the book, full of curiosity. "Advice to Young Ladies about to Enter into Housekeeping. By a Clergyman's Wife." And on the fly-leaf was written, "For the future Mrs. Kerleton, with respectful regards." On the paper enclosing the watch was written, "Miss Lucy."

"Well, if ever I saw such a start as this!" uttered Aunt Copp, while Lucy's face turned of an indignant red.

"It is shameful, Aunt Copp! It is quite indecent of you! You have been saying something to him about me. I am sure of it!"

"I declare to goodness I have not," fired Aunt Copp. "This offer of marriage—for it's nothing less—has come of his own free will, and from no talking of mine. Shan't we have a nice time of it, getting her wedding things ready, Hester?"

"Aunt Copp, I always thought you were an idiot, and now I know

it," retorted Lucy, struggling between tears and rage. "Offer of marriage, indeed! if it *is* an offer of marriage, you may take it to yourself. Hester, just pack the watch back again to the Seaford Arms; send Phœby with it. My name was not on the book, so Aunt Copp can do as she chooses with that—keep it for herself, and tell him so."

Lucy's tirade was cut short, for the blind was again pushed partly open, and a scarlet wrist went in.

"I beg your pardon," cried the Captain's voice, "I forgot this." Aunt Copp involuntarily stretched forth her hand, and received another packet, similar to the one which had contained the watch, the Captain darting off as before at the military pace of a forced march.

"Miss Lucy Halliwell," read Mrs. Copp, again, through her spectacles.

"I won't have it! call him back! throw it after him!" exclaimed Lucy. But Aunt Copp told her she knew better what she was about, and opened it.

A pretty gold chain, and the key of the watch.

"Well, my dear," said Aunt Copp, "you are in luck."

"Luck!" ironically uttered Lucy. "The man's a fool."

"I know who is a greater," rejoined Mrs. Copp, laughing at Lucy.

"Hester, I appeal to you. Is it right—is it in accordance with good manners, his poking these things in at the window? Ought they not to be sent back instantly?"

"I think it is in accordance with good-nature," Hester gently replied, "and to forward them back, as you suggest, would be returning insult for kindness. When he next calls, let Aunt Copp return him the presents, and civilly inform him that you cannot accept them."

"I wish you may get me to do it," cried Mrs. Copp. "'There is a tide in the affairs of man,' and Lucy has now got hers."

So the task fell to Hester. And when the Captain called that afternoon (still in his regimentals) Hester went to him alone. But before she had well entered upon the subject, Captain Kerleton interrupted her, and made Lucy a very handsome offer. Hester was at a nonplus: not knowing, now the affair was put upon a regular footing, whether Lucy would have him or not. She retired to the next room.

"Have him? of course," cried Aunt Copp.

"Have him? of course not," repeated Lucy.

"Niece Lucy, the matter is serious now, and you must not be childish over it. What is your objection?"

"I don't know enough of him," said Lucy. "Consider, Aunt Copp, it is only a fortnight since we first set eyes on him. The idea of promising to marry a man after a fortnight's acquaintance!"

"You need not marry him off-hand—or promise to," argued Aunt

Copp. "You call tell him you wish to see a little more of him before deciding: that will be neither accepting nor rejecting, and give you both time to improve your acquaintance with each other. *I'll manage it.*"

Before they could prevent her, she dashed out of the room and joined the Captain, whom they had heard whistling as he leaned from the window. What she said to him neither Hester nor Lucy knew, but she reappeared with the Captain in her wake, and the latter fell on his regimental knees, in the most ridiculous manner, and began kissing Lucy's hand.

When they could get him off his knees and his heroics, Hester and Mrs. Copp strove to convince him how the case stood: that he was not to look upon Lucy as engaged to him, but that she was willing to meet him as an acquaintance, till they had seen more of each other. Oh, yes, yes, he agreed to everything, too glad to do it, except to taking back the presents. He grew excited when it was named, and said they would never mention it again, unless they wished to cut him to the throat. Whether he unintentionally substituted that word for heart, or whether he really contemplated making an illegitimate use of his shaving razors, in case his presents were rejected, they did not comprehend. "Never mind the presents, Lucy," cried Aunt Copp; "don't offend him: it will be time enough to send them back if you finally reject him."

So Captain Kerleton stayed on at the Seaford Arms, and Aunt Copp stayed on with her nieces, for she argued that to leave Lucy at so critical a period would not be "ship-shape." It came to be rumoured in the village that the Captain and Lucy were engaged, and some congratulated her, in spite of her denial, and some were envious. The Captain had bought favour on all sides. When anyone gave a party, there would appear dishes of the choicest fruit, the offering of the Captain, and baskets of fish were perpetually arriving everywhere with the Captain's card: he kept the younger ladies in gloves and bouquets, and once, when a concert was to be given in the village for the benefit of the poor music master, the Captain bought up all the tickets, and treated everybody. Twice he scattered silver by the handful amongst the field labourers, and the village was in an uproar for days afterwards, to the wrath of the farmers and the edification of the beershops. Nothing came amiss to the Captain's purse; whatever he saw, he bought up and distributed, from parcels of new books to litters of sucking-pigs. As to Lucy Halliwell, the things that arrived for her were just as incongruous. One morning there was a knock at the door, and upon Phœby's answering it, an air-cushion was delivered to her; an hour afterwards there was another knock, and this proved to be the milliner's girl, bearing a flaming rose-coloured bonnet and feathers. Aunt Copp thought these two articles must be meant for her, not being particularly suitable to Lucy: however, they were put by with the rest

of the things. As to remonstrating with Captain Kerleton, they had given that over as a bad job, and had no resource but to take the things in. Many of them came from London, without address to send them back to, and they did not choose to raise a scandal by despatching them to the Captain's apartments at the inn.

But things could not go on like that for ever, and Lucy felt that she must accept or reject him. The Captain felt so too, and he went up one day and told Lucy, in the presence of her sister and aunt, that he had been lying on tenter-hooks all night, and for several previous nights besides, and *would* she marry him.

"I'll make her so happy," said he, appealing to Aunt Copp, as Lucy glided from the room; "she shall have what she likes, and go where she likes. Would she like to see China?"

Mrs. Copp thought not. It was too far. She had once, herself, been in the Chinese seas, and was glad to her heart to get into British ones again.

"Oh! Because distance is no object to me," explained the Captain.

"I think, Captain Kerleton, that Lucy would wish to see a little of your family," suggested Hester.

"There's not a soul left of it but me and my brother," answered the Captain. "When he comes back from Scotland, I'll take Lucy up to see him, if she likes; which would be a good opportunity for her to get anything in London she may want for the wedding."

He evidently spoke in no bad faith; Hester saw he did not. But he did make simple remarks now and then, such as one might expect to hear from a child.

"That's not the fashion in our part of the country," said Aunt Copp, snapping him up. "Young ladies don't go on journeys with gentlemen before they are married to them."

"But that is exactly what I want," returned the Captain. "I have been ready to marry her all along. It was Miss Lucy who would not. Will she marry me to-morrow?"

"Goodness, Captain," remonstrated Aunt Copp. "With no house, and no establishment, and no anything? The neighbours would think us all out of our senses together."

"Well, the long and the short of it is this, if Miss Lucy will not have me, I shall go and find somebody else that will," cried the Captain, turning sulky—an occasional failing of his. "And I'll go by the mail to-night, if she does not give me an answer to-day."

Lucy gave him his answer, and accepted him. "But, Hester," she said to her sister, "I do it chiefly to oblige him and Aunt Copp; I don't much care for him." And Hester's opinion was that Lucy spoke the truth.

"I am not madly in love, you know," she went on, laughing, "as you were with somebody, once upon a time. I do not fancy it is in my constitution, or else our friend the Captain has failed to call it forth."

It was decided that, before fixing on any place for a residence, Captain Kerleton and Lucy should travel a little, after their marriage, taking Paris first. The Captain was perfectly agreeable to anything: would stop in the neighbourhood of Seaford, or live in London, or be a fixture in Paris, or voyage over to China. Everything that Lucy or Mrs. Copp suggested he fell in with. He seemed to think more about personal trifles. "Would you like me to go through the ceremony in my regimentals, Miss Lucy, or in plain clothes?" he inquired. "Such—let us say—as a blue coat, white waistcoat, and black—these things," slapping his knee. "What is your advice?"

It was a very home question, especially before witnesses, and Lucy blushed excessively. "Perhaps Aunt Copp can tell," she stammered.

"Oh, as to those trifles, it's not a bit of consequence," irreverently answered Aunt Copp. "When you two have once got your wedding over, you will know what nonsense it was to have made any fuss about it—as we old married stagers can tell you. Captain, of course you will have your brother down to be groomsman?"

"No, I won't," replied the Captain, bluntly. "He is the most interfering fellow going, always meddling and thwarting. You don't know the scrapes he has got me into through his interference."

"But your own brother, Captain Kerleton," urged Aunt Copp. "It would be so very unfilial."

"Shouldn't care if he was my own mother," doggedly retorted the Captain. "He is not coming down to my wedding."

But Aunt Copp was of a different opinion. And what should she do, unknown to everyone, but despatch the following note to Major Kerleton, the Captain's brother, at his town house:—

"DEAR SIR,—As we are soon to be near connections, I make no apology for addressing you. Captain Kerleton being about to marry my niece, Miss Lucy Halliwell, I think it only seemly and right that you, as the Captain's elder brother and nearest relative, should be present to give your support and countenance to the ceremony. It will not take place for three weeks or a month, and we are only now beginning the preparations; but I write thus early to give an opportunity of my letter being forwarded to you in Scotland, where we hear you are staying. If you oblige me with a line in reply, stating that you accord us the favour of your company, I will write again and let you know when the day is fixed.

"Remaining, dear sir,

"Your obedient servant,

"Major Kerleton."

"REBECCA COPP."

And Mrs. Copp hugged herself in secret over what she had done, and told nobody.

CHAPTER XIII.

LUCY'S ROMANCE.

MEANWHILE they began to be actively engaged, getting Lucy ready for her wedding. One morning they were in the midst of work, Miss Bowen, the dressmaker, having gone to them for the day, when they saw Captain Kerleton approaching the house. Lucy told Phoeby to say they were engaged, but would see him in the afternoon. But the Captain sent word up he had something very particular to communicate to Miss Lucy ; so she had to go to him.

The Captain wanted her to go for a walk, with, of course, Hester or Aunt Copp, for she was not in the habit of walking out alone with him. Which was the "particular communication" he had to make.

"It is out of my power this morning," Lucy replied. "We have some work about, which we cannot quit."

"Leave them to do it," advised the Captain ; "you come for a walk. Come by yourself : never mind what that old Aunt Copp says."

"They cannot do without me," explained Lucy. "The dressmaker is cutting out my morning dresses, and I must be there that she may try them on."

"Put it off till to-morrow," urged the Captain. "Work can be done one day as well as another. See what a splendid morning it is."

"Miss Bowen will not be here to-morrow," answered Lucy. "Indeed I cannot leave them now."

"But I want you to come," persisted Captain Kerleton, somewhat after the fractious manner of a spoiled child. "You must come. You'll never go and set up your rubbish of work in opposition to my wishes, Miss Lucy ?"

"Do not put it in that light," said Lucy, gently. "My dresses must be tried on, or they cannot be made ; and if I went out they would all be at a standstill. I shall be most happy to go with you later in the day."

"Then you will not grant me this simple favour ?"

"I cannot," returned Lucy, and away rushed the Captain, dashing to the front door, and stamping across the road.

In the evening he arrived again. They were at tea, taking it in the workroom for convenience' sake, when Phoeby entered and said the Captain wanted to speak to Hester. "Not Miss Lucy," Phoeby repeated, "Miss Hester." Hester went downstairs. Captain Kerleton was sitting in the easy-chair, looking red and excited.

"Do you know how she behaved to me this morning ?" he began, without preface or ceremony.

"Who ?" asked Hester.

"She. Miss Lucy. I asked her, as the greatest favour, to go for

a little walk with me, and she told me to my face that she would not."

"She really could not, Captain Kerleton," said Hester. "I have no doubt she would have liked to do so. You must not fancy she acted from caprice: Lucy is not capable of it."

"She told me there was some trash of sewing going on, and she had to stop in for it."

"It was the case."

"Well," returned the Captain, speaking in that dogged, obstinate manner which now and then came over him, "I look upon it in this light. When a young lady, who has promised to be your wife, makes an excuse that she can't go out with you, it is equivalent to saying she wants to break matters off. That is how I have taken it."

"Break—what?" uttered Hester, staring at the Captain, and feeling as if she were turning into a cold perspiration.

"Why, I conclude that Miss Lucy wished to make known, in a roundabout way, that she was tired of me. And I have acted upon it."

"Dear Captain Kerleton, you are entirely mistaken," said Hester. "I can assure you Lucy is perfectly faithful to you. The work she had to stay in for was in preparation for her marriage."

"It's too late now," said the Captain, with redoubled obstinacy, "for I think I know somebody who would suit me better."

Hester sat opposite to him, glued to her chair, unable to utter a word, and wondering whether he had taken leave of his senses. He, however, was not glued to his, for he suddenly rose from it, and dropped down on his knees close to Hester.

"My dear Miss Hester, it's you and nobody else. I do think you the most charming, amiable creature, and I have transferred my affection from Miss Lucy to you. Will you have me?"

Hester was never so taken aback in her life, and a suspicion did cross her, in earnest, that Lucy's refusal in the morning must have put the Captain's brains to flight. He took forcible possession of her hands, and would neither get up, nor let her do so. While they were in this ridiculous position, who should come bustling into the room, with the sugar-basin, but Aunt Copp.

"Why, what on earth—Hester! what's the matter?"

The Captain took a move sideways on his knees, and addressed himself to Aunt Copp, which afforded an opportunity to Hester of rising.

"Miss Lucy has cut me, ma'am. That is, she acted—purposely—so as to make me cut her; and my affections are now fixed on Miss Hester. I was on the point of praying her to name her own day for our union, when you interrupted us."

"Good patience deliver us!" ejaculated Aunt Copp, her mouth opening with astonishment, and remaining so. "What is all this?"

Hester could not speak for laughing then, the whole thing struck

her as so supremely absurd. There knelt Captain Kerleton in the everlasting regimentals, his hands thrown theatrically out towards Mrs. Copp, and his face twisted into a die-away expression towards Hester, while Aunt Copp stood arrested in the middle of the room, one hand grasping the sugar-basin, the other the silver tongs, her face turning to petrification, and her eyes rolling from one to the other in a sort of horror.

"Niece Hester, what *is* this? I insist upon knowing."

"I think Captain Kerleton meant to play off a little joke with me, Aunt Copp," she answered. "Lucy, it seems, offended him this morning, but they will make it all right again."

"But, by heaven, it is no joke, Miss Hester," interrupted the Captain, springing up. "I mean it as real earnest."

"Then allow me to assure you, Captain Kerleton, that I shall never treat it but as a joke, now and always," Hester impressively whispered. "And pray let neither of us recur to it again, even in thought."

"Then you won't have me? You mean to insinuate that?" he reiterated aloud, pulling a face as long as his arm.

"I would not have you, Captain Kerleton, if you were worth your weight in gold," she said. "So let the joke pass away, and we had better say nothing about it to Lucy."

"Highly-tighty," cried Aunt Copp, recovering from her petrification and going forward, "but you can't do these things, Captain. Shake off one sister and take up another! I see what it is: you have been getting up your temper because Lucy crossed your whim this morning. So now you must get it down again. We were just going out to take a walk, and the best thing you can do is to go with us. Why, you would be as bad as a sailor."

"A sailor?" sullenly repeated the Captain.

"Yes, sir, a sailor. They have sweethearts by the dozen, in each port, and that's well known. Many's the wrangle I have had with my boy about that: he vowing, by all that's blue, that *he* had not, and I knowing he had. Don't tell me. But you can't have two in a house, Captain. So sit down there and get cool while we put our things on."

He went out with Aunt Copp and Lucy. Hester remained at home, truly uncomfortable, and deliberating whether she ought not to tell Lucy what had taken place. For if the thing were not a joke—as she kept trying to persuade herself, though the more she tried, the more incomprehensible a joke it grew—was a man capable of these violent changes and fits of temper one to whom they ought to entrust Lucy?

The following day dawned, and they all rose as usual, little thinking what it was to bring forth. For how many a one has a day risen in happiness to close in sorrow, dark as the darkest night! It was not strictly sorrow, however, that came to them,

rather mortification. Lucy went out to spend the day with some friends, who had invited her for a farewell visit previous to her marriage; and as Hester and Aunt Copp were seated at work, after dinner, the latter spoke.

"Well, I think I must have made a kaleidoscope of my spectacles, for he is ever changing; now it is he, now it is not! Hester, is that the Captain, or not?"

Hester followed the direction of her aunt's eyes, which were fixed on a gentleman who was advancing up the road in face of them. "Yes—no—yes," was her contradictory reply. "I declare, Aunt Copp, I am not sure. One minute it looks like him, and the next it does not. If it is the Captain, he has discarded his regimentals."

It was not Captain Kerleton, but one who bore a striking resemblance to him.

"I know!" exclaimed Aunt Copp, with awakened interest. "It is his brother. I wrote for him."

"You, Aunt Copp?"

"Yes, to come to the wedding. But I told him to wait for a second letter. He is come too soon."

Phoeby brought in a card, "Major Kerleton," and ushered in the Major after it, a cordial-mannered man. He proceeded to explain his business, and poor Aunt Copp was ready to sink through her chair with vexation, for it was she who had been the means of introducing the Captain to Seaford, and—worse still—to Lucy.

All that they had observed as strange in his conduct was now accounted for. *Captain Kerleton was a lunatic.* Some years previously, when in India, he had met with an accident, which caused concussion of the brain, and he had never entirely recovered his intellects. At that time the Captain was on the point of marriage with a young lady, to whom he was much attached, but the match was then broken off, and this seemed to have left some impression on his mind, which it could not get rid of. He came home, and had since lived with his brother, and years had wrought so much improvement in him that he would pass muster in society without suspicion, as he had done at Seaford: the only point on which his intellects were still wrong was a propensity to make offers of marriage. "I have had no end of trouble with him on this score," said the Major, "for if he has made a fool of one lady in the last eight years, he has of fifty. Of course, when I am on the spot, I whisper a word, and matters are soon rectified; but once or twice, when he has taken advantage of my absence from home, to start off, as he did this time, there has been more trouble to get them straight. It is five years ago this summer," continued the Major, lowering his voice, "that he found his way into Yorkshire. I was taken ill—seriously ill—on my journey, and was absent longer than I had ever been. By George! when I came back, and proceeded to hunt up Richard, I found him a married man."

"A married man!" uttered Mrs. Copp.

"He had gammoned some young lady into marrying him: a very nice sort of girl she was, too; of respectable family. But they were poor, thought they had a catch in Dick, and hurried on the match."

"Mercy on us!" breathed Aunt Copp. "Is she living?"

"To be sure she is. She ——"

"Why, then, the Captain is a married man now," she screamed, unceremoniously interrupting Major Kerleton.

"Neither more nor less," returned the Major. "When his young wife, poor thing, found out Dick's infirmity, she refused to remain with him—and quite right of her, too, I think. She has lived since then on the Continent with a married sister; Dick—or, at least, I, for him—allowing her a yearly income."

"But what a wicked man he must be to attempt to marry my niece when he has a wife living," remonstrated Aunt Copp.

"Not wicked," interposed the Major. "Upon this point Richard is *insane*; the doctors say incurably so. He would marry twenty wives if he could get the opportunity, and never know that he was doing wrong."

"A regular Bluebeard. He ought to be tried for bigamy," groaned Aunt Copp. "But it has been a blessed escape for Lucy."

"It has indeed. Not but that I am sincerely grieved he should ever have been brought into contact with your niece, for this *exposé* cannot be a pleasant one for her. He left home, it seems, the very day I did, and must have lost no time."

"He ought to be confined," said Mrs. Copp.

"He is so sane on other points, that to confine him would be scarcely justifiable," returned the Major. "But I shall learn a lesson by this last vagary, and shall place a watch over him, if I have to leave home again."

"Sane on other points," repeated Aunt Copp; "I don't know about that. He seems to have unlimited command of money."

"Not unlimited. His fortune is a large one, and he has command over a portion of it."

"Perhaps you'll walk this way, sir," said Mrs. Copp, rising, and leading the way upstairs to a spare bedroom. Hester followed. "There!" she said, exhibiting the curious lot of presents Lucy had received, "perhaps you can tell me what is to be done with all these, Major Kerleton. The Captain sent them here, and we could not stop him."

Major Kerleton laughed heartily. "Poor Dick!" he said, "this is another of his tricks. He gives away all before him."

"He has supplied the parish here," was Aunt Copp's rejoinder. "What is to be done with these?"

"Whatever you please. If there are any worth keeping, pray retain them. The rest dispose of any way—throw them away if they are no better worth."

"Several of the articles are of value. The watch and chain especially, and some rings. But, sir," and Mrs. Copp drew herself up to her full height, "my niece will not allow her to keep them, or anything else."

"I hope and trust she will," warmly returned the Major. "I shall pray Miss Lucy to accept them *from me*. Ah, my dear ladies," he continued, taking a hand of each, "I only wish it was in my power to make any reparation to her for the annoyance which my unfortunate brother has brought on her and you. Pecuniary compensation is out of the question, but ——"

"Sir!" interrupted Aunt Copp, in an awful voice, "do you know that you are addressing persons of your own standing in life? The sister and daughter of one who was of your own rank, the Major Halliwell. He traces his descent to nobility, and not far distant. In George the Third's time ——"

"My dear lady, you are mistaking me. I was about to say that the only compensation possible is the hearty expression of my heartfelt and genuine sympathy: it is not in my power to offer any other."

"Not any," responded Aunt Copp, with stony rigidity. "The sooner such a lunatic as he is is out of Seaford the better for all parties."

So thought Major Kerleton; and he started that same day with the poor madman for London.

Of course the event to Lucy Halliwell could not be otherwise than deeply mortifying, but her heart had never been engaged in it, and she soon grew to laugh at it heartily. They took to calling it "Lucy's Adventure," for it was the only romantic incident that ever happened to Lucy.

What was now to be the career of Hester and Lucy Halliwell? The year in their home at Seaford had expired, they had their £500 each, and must look out for some means of earning a livelihood. It is certain that young women in a respectable sphere of life, when left unprovided for by the death of parents, require more sympathy than any other class. It may be they have a little money: it is to be hoped that daughters so left generally have. This they proceed to embark in various ways, according to their capacities and the ideas they have imbibed in their station of society. But let the reader be very sure that there are few of these unprotected women but have to bear a crushing weight of struggle and sorrow. Anxious perplexity, pinching want, heart-breaking care—these are often theirs; and for many there is no turn, no worldly rest, till they find it in the grave.

Aunt Copp, who remained with them to wind up affairs at Seaford, proposed several things. One was that Lucy should go out as governess, for which she was so well qualified, and that Hester should have a home with her at Liverpool: which she should be

proud and happy to give her, she observed, and turn over to her all the sewing and pudding-making. But they decided, themselves, upon establishing a ladies' boarding-school. It appeared more congenial than anything else, and they both felt that they had the qualifications and will to do their *full duty* to the children who might be entrusted to their care: Hester in contributing to their comforts, and teaching them, as she phrased it, plain sewing and grammar and spelling; Lucy in imparting her own high standard of education and accomplishments.

Where was it to be? They decided upon the neighbourhood of London, and departed for the great city; but they had much trouble to settle themselves. Some of the suburbs they found overstocked with schools, some were not deemed highly healthy, some had no suitable house that they could rent. They did settle themselves at last, after spending a purse of money, as they said, over those whirling omnibuses. The precise locality need not be named, but it is a well-known one. They took a capital house, large and convenient, enclosed from the high road by a wall; with a pretty garden in front and a playground behind. They paid eighty pounds a year for it, besides taxes; a rent that frightened them. Quarter day never drew near, for many years, but it brought to them a heart-sickening. The next step was to furnish. The furniture from their old home was the worse for wear, and though it had filled a small house, it was lost in a large one. So they bought new for the drawing room and for the children's bedroom that was to be, with desks and forms for the school-room, disposing the old about the house as they best could, and occasionally, as time went on, buying some almost indispensable article, as they thought they could spare the money.

Of course they had sent out cards and advertised, and then they sat down in their new house, and waited for pupils. The first quarter they received some demands for circulars, but nothing came of it: the next they had three day-scholars, two sisters and another. Hester then took the resolution to call at the principal houses in the neighbourhood, and urge her hope of patronage. Whether they liked her appearance she did not know, but soon after that they had eleven day-scholars and five boarders; so they thought success was coming all at once, and had indistinct visions of retiring with a fortune.

(To be continued.)

IDLE TIME NOT IDLY SPENT.

THIS was Sir Henry Walton's definition of angling ; but it admits of a much wider application. It suggests that it is possible to waste time wisely, which is a lesson much needed in these days of high pressure and competition. We are becoming gluttons of work. We debauch our minds by using them to excess. A morbid appetite for toil is being cultivated. Many men are almost incapable of taking a holiday, and seem to have lost the power of enjoying anything except work.

That it is possible to get into a condition of caring for nothing but work may be seen by the case of Sir Walter Scott. For years he turned out twelve volumes yearly ; but no constitution could stand such an amount of brain-pressure. When Dr. Abercromby expostulated with him as to his enormous amount of brain work, and said, " Really, Sir Walter, you must not work," Scott's answer was—" I tell you what it is, doctor ; Molly, when she puts the kettle on, might just as well say, ' Kettle, kettle, don't boil ! ' " Southey became equally incapable of desisting from work. Dr. Arnold observed of him, that he even worked as he walked—for exercise it could not be called ; he was then reading and annotating.

The harder a man works the more need he has of recreation. We may appear to be spending time idly when we amuse ourselves, but the time is by no means idly spent if it creates over again and fits for more work exhausted animal or mental spirits. Idleness is not all idleness, for play and diversion are not less necessary for healthy life than rest and refreshment. St. John the Evangelist, as Cassian relates, amusing himself one day with a tame partridge on his hand, was asked by a huntsman, how such a man as he could spend his time in so unprofitable a manner ? To whom St. John replied, " Why dost thou not carry thy bow always bent ? " " Because," answered the huntsman, " if it were always bent, I fear it would lose its spring, and become useless." " Be not surprised then," replied the Apostle, " that I should sometimes remit a little of my close attention of spirit to enjoy a little recreation, that I may afterwards employ myself more fervently in Divine contemplation."

As the man who eats little eats most, because he lives longer to eat, so he who works wisely, and therefore not too hard, really gets through more work, because he lives longer. So true is the proverb that often the half is more than the whole. An undergraduate knows that someone he wishes to beat at the degree examination only reads six hours a day. " If," he argues, " I can work ten or twelve hours I shall get twice as good a place." But does he ? No ; he tries it, and breaks down, because he forgot that sometimes the half is more

than the whole ; that six hours with rest and recreation is better than twelve employed without them. It was a rule which Loyola imposed upon his followers, that after two hours of work the mind should always have some relaxation.

One of the best kinds of recreation is some hobby, whereby we ride or drive out of the ruts of our common life. It may be a very cheap and humble one ; it may seem trifling. Our knowledge, for instance, of botany, chemistry, geology, or other 'ologies may be very small, but it is astonishing what an interest may be given to even the commonest walk by the knowledge of some of the mere rudiments of science. Mr. George Henry Lewes was one day dredging a road-side pond. A glass jar stood beside him, and into it he put all his "finds." Presently an Irish labourer came to him, and inquired, with a sneer, whether he was fishing for salmon. Mr. Lewes quietly said, "Yes." But the man did not go away, and when Mr. Lewes's net landed a big black-and-yellow triton the Irishman's curiosity was fairly aroused. He saw the many other living things which the jar held, and as to which he asked many questions, all kindly answered. The labourer stayed till Mr. Lewes had to leave, and his remark now was, "Och ! then, and it's a fine thing to be able to name all God's creatures."

We must not, however, make too much of what may be called Scientific Recreation. Many have no natural liking for it : no tastes in that direction. For these the recreative change lies in direct play. Socrates, one of the wisest of men, is said, for variety of recreation, to have ridden a wooden horse. When not in humour for physical exercise, he played upon the lyre, which tuned and tempered his mind. Plato, like his master, was a great believer in recreation, and excelled in all the Grecian exercises. Boileau and Luther were great skittle players. The latter relaxed himself by playing on the guitar and the flute, and by turning articles in wood. Voltaire's amusement was private theatricals and marionettes.

When Diocletian was petitioned to resume the imperial purple, which he had resigned, he replied to the messengers : "You would not have asked such a thing of me if you saw the fine melons I have now ripening, and the plantations about my villa that I have made." The idle time of Horace, Virgil, Lord Bacon, Pope, Cowper, and of many other writers was spent not idly but with great benefit to their writing in gardening. The great engineer George Stephenson was troubled by his cucumbers, which *would* grow crooked ; but he had large glass jars constructed, into which he inserted the growing fruit, saying, "I think I have bothered them noo," and then they grew straight.

Sir Walter Scott was an expert wielder of the axe, and competed with his men at Abbotsford as to the paucity of blows by which a tree could be brought down. The wood rang ever and anon with laughter while he shared their labours. Among other celebrated

woodmen may be mentioned Pitt, Wilberforce and Mr. Gladstone. Archbishop Whately believed in exercise more than in physic. When he felt out of sorts he took up his axe and went out to hew away at some ponderous trunk. Some good people thought that the Archbishop must be a very cruel master because they saw, one piercingly cold, snowy day, in his grounds, a scantily-clothed old man cutting wood. They were not a little surprised to find that it was the Archbishop himself. "Who is your doctor?" said someone to Carlyle. "My best doctor," he replied, "is a horse."

"I have often heard," said Cicero, "that when Lucilius and Scipio used to go into the country, escaping from their labours in the city as from bondage, they would amuse themselves and play boys' parts incredibly well. I dare hardly repeat of such men how they used to go picking up shells along the shore, and descend to all sorts of frolic and recreation. In fact," he continues, "no one seems to me to be free who does not sometimes do nothing."

At Laleham, Dr. Arnold used to leap, bathe and row with his pupils, and always delighted in what he called "a skirmish across country." We never could understand why grown-up men are laughed at if they indulge in play; but even a wise man like Dr. Samuel Clarke was afraid of fools. Once, while exercising himself with a friend in leaping over chairs he said, "Now we must stop, for a fool is coming." An ecclesiastic coming to visit Cardinal Richelieu, found his eminence trying to see how high a point of a wall he could jump. Instead of appearing surprised, the visitor had tact enough to commence jumping against the Cardinal, taking care, however, to jump a little lower. He jumped himself into a good benefice.

Livingstone always regretted that he had not spent more of his time in playing with children, especially with his own. The idle time of many eminent men has been spent not idly but very profitably in doing this. Henry IV. of France was a great lover of his "little platoon of children," and delighted in their gambols. One day, when trotting round the room on his hands and knees, with the Dauphin on his back, and the other children urging him on to a gallop in imitation of a horse, an ambassador suddenly entered and surprised the royal family in the midst of their play. Henry, without rising, asked, "Have *you* children, M. l'Ambassadeur?"

"Yes, sire."

"In that case I proceed with the sport."

Who would have thought that the dignified and stately William Pitt should have found his greatest recreation in the society of children? On one occasion some children were trying to blacken his face with burnt cork when a servant announced that Lords Castlereagh and Liverpool desired to see him on business. "Let them wait in the other room," was the answer; and the great minister instantly turned to battle with his young assailants, catching up a

cushion and belabouring them with it in glorious fun. After some time he said: "Stop; this will do. I could easily beat you all, but we must not keep these grandees waiting any longer." Both Napoleon and Wellington were fond of playing with children. The former would take the infant king of Rome in his arms, and standing in front of a mirror, make the oddest grimaces in the glass. One of his favourite games was Blind Man's Buff.

Parents and teachers who, in their anxiety to force children's education, think that every moment they spend away from books is wasted should be reminded that young people who rise early in their classes at school or at college are generally like those who rise very early in the morning—"conceited all the forenoon (of life) and stupid all the afternoon." The play-time of children may seem idle time, but it is by no means idly spent, for it helps them to grow, and lays down that basis of physical health upon which nearly all success in life is built.

Many busy men get into the habit of bolting their food, especially their mid-day meal, and think that any time spent at it is idle time. In this way they bring upon themselves indigestion and other kinds of ill-health which waste time with a vengeance and shorten life. An extra ten minutes given to a meal may seem idle time, but it is by no means idly spent, because slow, deliberate eating of food is necessary if we would get out of it the greatest amount of nourishment and therefore of energy.

Nor is an extra hour in bed in the morning or even an occasional day in bed necessarily time wasted. To rest the nerves and the tired system generally is not to spend time idly. The opinions of learned men have differed much as to the time required for sound sleep. Baxter fixed upon four hours, Wesley on six, and Lord Coke on seven. Sir Walter Scott required eight hours' sound sleep to keep his brain in full working order. Dr. Fowler, of Salisbury, a veteran well-known in scientific circles, and to the last a frequenter of the British Association, said that one essential of long life was to "lie abed in the morning until you are *done enough*." He lived to ninety-eight.

Idle time is spent not idly if when travelling or on a holiday we refuse to hurry away from interesting places until we have observed, and, as it were, made our own all that there is to be seen. Globe-trotters think that their time is being idled away if they stop for a single hour at one place, though it be as interesting as Rome or Pompeii. Watch in hand, they never cease to complain of this "creeping train." They are as anxious about their time as are sermon-listeners, who, though they do nothing on their return from church, grudge every moment to the preacher.

RACHEL.

BY M. E. DAVENPORT.

“**RACHEL!** Rachel! for well nigh twenty minutes hast thou been standing in that same place looking at that same stone wall. I fear sadly thy thoughts have been wandering on vain subjects instead of being fixed on things suitable for thee to think of, such as Brother Jabez’s last discourse. Thou must wage fiercer warfare with the world, the flesh, and the devil, or they will prove too strong for thee.”

So spake Mistress Jael Winter as she stood in the shadow of her richly laden portico. The few rays of sunshine that shot in here and there between the leaves fell on her white muslin cap and kerchief, and actually played about her firm mouth, and glistened in her black eyes, taking liberties with that face which neither smiles nor tears had dared to take for many years.

She waited a moment to see that her words had taken effect, then turned again to the house.

Some half-dozen yards distant, with her elbows resting on the top of the garden gate, stood Mistress Jael’s niece, Rachel Winter, though, as a stranger would at once have conjectured, there was no blood relationship between the two. Rachel bore the same name as her aunt, wore the same dress, minus the cap, framed her thoughts in the same style of words; but there all resemblance ceased.

Rachel’s character, like Mistress Jael’s, was written very legibly on her face. There was the highly imaginative brow, the dreamy, dusky eyes beneath, and a little mouth, whose want of firmness was atoned for by its sweetness. The dark brown hair, which *would* be wavy, however much Aunt Jael might deplore it, was coiled up into as little space as possible at the back; clearly the glory of a woman was accounted only as something to be hidden here; but the perfect shape of the little head, with all its womanly grace, was more evidently shown.

It moved half round as Mistress Jael’s words came clear and strong across the lawn, and a faint flush coloured her cheek. Then she stayed yet another moment in the same place, and murmured softly to herself.

“The world, the flesh, and the devil! Truly it is a beautiful world outside here! And my other world, Aunt Jael, Cousin James, my father, and Brother Jabez, they are all good. I do not see how harm could come from them. Then the flesh—well / must be the flesh. Ah! truly, I have been tempted to wish for things that would not be fitting. I have been dreaming all this time of *him*, of what he said when I thanked him for helping me over the brook. But then I did not ask to meet him; he happened to be there. It was

no fault of mine, and I could but say, 'I thank thee,' when he had been so kind, and offered him my hand. I could not know that he would hold it as he did and—Oh! he is there!"

The girl's face looked more bewitching than ever with its shy, hot glow, as she bowed her head in answer to the raising of a brown hat outside, and then ran indoors.

The possessor of the brown hat, who had had the garden-gate in view some minutes before he showed himself, certainly did not look like a member of Brother Jabez's flock. His clothes and bearing betokened an intimacy with the gay world, and not only with the Bohemian part of it. The first thing to attract the notice of an onlooker was the atmosphere of perfect self-possession, perfect calm which seemed to envelop him; that calm which is only found in a man who is sure of himself; intelligently sure. The grey eyes had a steady, penetrating look in them as they rested on Mistress Jael's face; a look which seemed to be reading more than the outward form and expression. But as they fell on Rachel they grew a shade darker, and flashed with something it would be hard to define; something Rachel had the full benefit of as she raised her brown eyes for that half second.

It was only a few days before this that the little incident occurred which Rachel's unruly thoughts would run on.

She was coming home from the town that lay about a mile off, and had chosen the path through the wood, as being the coolest in the heat of the day. But to her great dismay, when she reached the little brook at the far end, whose only bridge was a row of stepping stones, she found that the heavy rains of the previous day had swollen the waters. There was a moment's indecision as to which would be the worst alternative: going back again and round another way, or getting her feet wet crossing here, with a slight risk of being over-balanced by the force of the water.

The latter proved the least distasteful, and she was beginning warily to pick her way, when a gentleman, who had been an unseen watcher of her dismay, appeared on the opposite bank, asked permission to help her across, and at once walked onto the stones and held out his hand.

When safe on the other side, the stranger should of course have raised his hat and let her go. But he didn't. He held the little hand in his own for a moment instead, and watched the colour come and go on her face, with most evident satisfaction at being himself its cause, and made some little honeyed speech which came far more naturally to his tongue than Rachel's simple "I thank thee" had come to hers, but which she took for just what it seemed to mean. And it was well for her perhaps that this once she was right. Fred Carson did mean all he said. But he had to release her at last, and not another word could he get from her. He had frightened away her speech.

But to return to our starting point.

Rachel satisfied her aunt that the cakes had not taken much harm, and then stood before the broad dresser, with her hands in a basin of dough, which she was supposed to be preparing for the oven; but there would certainly be a famine in the land if all the bread had to come through her fingers.

For five minutes she had worked well, then she had deliberately dipped them in the flour, rubbed off the paste, folded them together, and now was gazing out of the open window in front of her, totally oblivious of all such things as half-finished bread or a cooling oven, and particularly unconscious of her aunt Jael's presence just behind her.

She was not allowed to remain long in this blissful ignorance.

Mistress Jael had watched her niece curiously for the last few days, and an indefinable something in her looks and manner had aroused her to the fact that a girl of eighteen is no longer a child; though what had happened to bring her womanhood to the surface she was at a loss to conjecture. She knew of no stranger in the little village. Strangers seldom came there; and even if they did, Rachel was half bound to her cousin James, whom she was to marry, all circumstances and parties agreeing, in a short time.

In spite of this knowledge there was an unmistakable difference in her niece, which showed that the surface of her nature had been ruffled, and gave indications of the feeling that had been at work; and Mistress Jael, though far at sea as to the root of the matter, proceeded to give her niece an extempore address which covered both possibilities and probabilities.

Her view was taken from her own experience, which had not been a happy one. She enlarged on the wickedness and folly of discontent when our lives are for a time at the side of still waters, and the future regret that would be turned back to them; and then skilfully steering her topic into the troubled waters of love and marriage, she grew eloquent on the subject of the selfishness and inconsistency of man in general and the opposite qualities of man in particular, meaning her son, and finished up by tragically referring to her broad view of one side of humanity.

"The hand thou thinkest strong to protect thee will but prove heavy to crush thee. I say this to thee now, Rachel, because to-day, somehow, for the first time, it has struck me, as I have watched thee, that thou art no longer a child. The woman's heart is moving within thee, and I would fain have thee learn the lesson I have learnt, without my experience. Surely one life is enough! And thou art not fitted for such rough teaching. Thou wouldst not live to be moulded into my form. The first stroke of the chisel such as I received would shiver thee to atoms. One comfort there is, however: things do seem now as though just ready for thy hand. While with me there is no chance of thy falling into danger, and thou art not to run away until thy cousin James makes thee his wife."

Rachel finished her bread after her aunt left her, quickly and deftly, and rather as though she wanted to keep her thoughts fixed on that and nothing else for awhile.

When it was finished she went to the old-fashioned staircase window. It was a favourite nook of hers, and she made a very pretty picture as she half sat, half reclined on the cushions.

At first her head drooped on the window frame. The shock of her aunt's words was still upon her. It was the first time she had been spoken to directly on such a subject; the first time she had been taught suspicion. Bitter as Mistress Jael's experience had been, it had not robbed her of the common-sense which told her that the surest way to warp a child's moral nature is to plant the seeds of distrust there. She would not have spoken now if she had not noticed this change in her niece.

It was nearly thirty years since she had settled down at Wood End, a grave, stern widow, very little different from what she was now, with the same dark cloud of sorrow resting on her brow; the same grim determination to suffer and be strong, but strong in her own strength. No one there knew her history, without it were the old servant who had come with her, and she was nearly as impenetrable as her mistress.

Some ten years later the little motherless Rachel was brought by her father and left in his sister-in-law's charge. Left as he well knew in kind, though strict, hands. Mistress Jael's character, both past and present, was fully known to him. In such an atmosphere had Rachel's early days been passed. There had been neither foolish fondness nor unjust severity. Perhaps some characters would not have waxed so pure and healthy, even though they had possessed more moral vigour to start with; they would have needed something more tangible to take hold of; but Rachel's imaginative brain and loving heart created an independent world of her own, and folded a garment of all that was lovable round those whom she wished to love.

And then the pleasant monotony of her life of late years had been lightened by the anticipation of the great change that her twenty-first birthday was to bring; when she was to give her hand, if her heart could go with it, to her cousin James, Aunt Jael's only child.

The child who, according to the last will and command of a most unnatural father, was to inherit in his twenty-fifth year, if he kept certain conditions, a large fortune. In case of his not keeping them, he was cut off with a shilling. The conditions were that until the appointed time he was to live apart from his mother. One meeting would forfeit all. A liberal sum of money was to be expended on his education; every advantage of instruction and travel was to be his; but he must never until the allotted time was passed set foot on the threshold of that dwelling which his mother had made her home.

People said that from the hour the will was read Jael Winter

never smiled again. It seemed as though the tide of human sympathy, which had before been so full and strong within her, was stopped. Contempt, neglect, cruelty had all hitherto proved ineffectual hindrances in its course. But this last aim at her happiness, given on his dying bed, was the acme of her misery. Her husband had certainly meant entire separation of mother and child. He never dreamed that the poor, apparently broken-spirited woman could live on her despair and anger so long. But he was mistaken.

Though with Jael all feeling seemed to have died out, yet something else sprang up in its stead; some of the energy and spirit of her youth returned to her; and when she had ruled both for herself and her child that it was better they should part, and had settled down in Allerslie, alone, it was more as one for whom the bitterness of death is passed, and who dared life to bring a heavier trial than had gone before.

To Rachel, the characters of both husband and wife were known, and the older she grew the better was she able to comprehend the nature of the mischief. It was only another story of an unequal marriage, and inequality of soul. Her uncle, from the information she had gathered, seemed to have been, at first, an easy-going, selfish man; intensely selfish both by nature and education. With mental gifts of a high order, he had been able to cut out for himself a pathway sufficiently removed from the ordinary road to satisfy even his self-love and vanity. No obstacle had ever proved insurmountable, until he met the beautiful quakeress and tried to make her yield to his power as so many others had done.

With her for a long time his efforts were unsuccessful, but that very non-success gave a double meaning to them. What he couldn't have become of course all the more desirable. Every talent to please which he possessed was exerted in the cause, and at length proved not in vain.

Jael Dakin had been fighting against her reason, not her heart, while she held out so long; and though the struggle had been a desperate one, yet she was more glad than otherwise when her lover's importunity compelled her to give in.

She knew they were unsuited to each other in almost every respect. She was not blind. She saw his overpowering conceit, his entire selfishness. And yet she loved him; perhaps through sympathy with the seeming reality of his love for her. She married him with her eyes open to what the result must be, and to what it might be. Her friends wondered how such a woman could exalt a man's mental gifts so highly as to hide his moral deficiencies. But they were mistaken; the weakness was not hidden from her; and she may have had some vague idea of dividing her own strength with him. If so, the idea in her case proved its own falseness.

Hers was in the main a strictly conscientious nature; conscientious to a fault, if such a thing be possible. It almost amounted to mor-

bidness in some of its details ; and there was no healthy influence to set against it.

Her husband's first indifference turned to contempt, then to positive dislike ; and it seemed as though the energy he had used to win her he would now use to crush her.

But for a long time he was unsuccessful. Jael had taken him, not for better, but for worse ; and she made her love last out in spite of all the blows aimed at it. It was only the last drop in the cup which proved too much. Forgiveness then seemed as impossible as forgetfulness, and the knowledge that she had brought it all on herself brought no softening influence.

Love for Rachel had long been almost the only ray of sunshine in her heart, and that had entered against her will. She had done her best to close up every niche and crevice ; but there was a quiet power in that warm, loving nature which would make itself felt, and she was obliged to yield.

Her greatest wish now was to see Rachel the wife of her son, from whom she constantly all these years had received letters which might have made glad the heart of any mother : letters which proved him possessed of his father's intellect in addition to the heart which his father had lacked.

Rachel had known for a long time the arrangement laid out for her in the future, and up to now had never had a thought in contradiction to it. But somehow as she sat in the staircase window that afternoon, a rebellious feeling would creep into her mind, and though she was horrified and frightened at it, yet she couldn't turn it out.

She pictured to herself her cousin James. A little man, with black eyes like Aunt Jael's ; an ugly-shaped head, with great projections here and there ; a largely developed bump for this and another for something else, as he was so clever—Rachel had not yet dived far into phrenology—a high, wide forehead, most absurdly too big for the rest of his face.

And then the clothes ! Light drab, made like Brother Jabez's—and the wide-brimmed hat—and—well—before she got any further, her thoughts wandered off to a certain brown tweed suit of a different make ; to a head that looked to possess all the intellect without having it so objectionably prominent ; to eyes that were like the grey dawn, with the promise of a bright warm day at the back ; and to a mouth that was nearly hidden by an auburn moustache, though you could just tell it was firm and strong and kind ; at least, Rachel thought she could tell.

We think she must have made good use of that one quick glance she owned to giving him.

Then part of her aunt's warning came back to her, "Say *no* to him in your heart before it is too late ! The hand you think so strong to protect will prove strong to crush !" Yes, thought Rachel, the hand that helped me over the brook was able to crush when he said good-bye.

An amused, conscious, happy look stole across her face, and she went through a sort of dumb pantomime of putting one little hand within the other and giving it a desperately hard squeeze.

But in spite of Rachel's weak faith in the truth of her aunt's words as far as her new acquaintance was concerned, other possible and unfortunate consequences of any closer intimacy would force themselves upon her consciousness.

There was the remotest probability that she might get to like the owner of those grey eyes; and then how about Cousin James? Poor child, the position was a novel one to her. She had neither the experiences of a score of romantically matured girl friends, nor the heart details of numberless fictitious heroines to tell her what falling in love meant. She had to fall back on her own instinct, and though that instinct seldom fails in speaking clearly, it is wonderful what various interpretations we can give to its words.

Rachel decided after much reflection that of course she was not in love then, and of course she could keep herself from falling in love afterwards. She would contrive not to put herself in his way again; but if circumstances compelled her to meet him—why then she would remember her aunt's warning and treat him so coldly that he wouldn't have any opportunity of making advances.

But circumstances did not combine for several days to give Rachel an opportunity of showing her great strength of resistance; and, to tell the truth, she was rather disappointed. It is not always pleasant to feel you have a quantity of superfluous energy lying useless. Mistress Jael had taken a severe cold, and for nearly a week was confined to her bed. Rachel's attendance in the sick room was constant, and she never got further in her out-door walks than the garden gate.

There she certainly had twice shown her strength of mind by running away as the brown hat appeared in the distance; but the sense of victory would be far stronger if she came into closer quarters with the enemy, she thought. There was something ignominious in flight every time. But she positively dare not take hold of the opportunity: it would have to take hold of her.

One afternoon towards the end of the week, Mistress Jael, noticing her niece's somewhat tired looks, said:

"Rachel, thou hadst better have an early tea, then put on thy things and go down to the village for those books which Brother Jabez promised to lend me. And thou mightest rest in the wood awhile, and be reading one of the volumes. It will contain nothing but what is suitable for thy meditation."

"Yes, Aunt Jael," was the answer. "And now thou art somewhat better, thou must not be anxious if I linger a little in the wood, as the weather is so beautiful and I have not been out for so long."

Mistress Jael gave her consent to anything in reason, and after the early tea Rachel departed.

Now the surest way to gain strength to overcome the second temptation is to resist the first, and Rachel felt that her protecting armour had grown some degrees stronger when she left the house. For had she not steadily refused to give just one more glance at herself in the mirror? And had not the ribbon, which had lain hidden so long in her drawer, been looked at and put back again? And had she not brought Cousin James's last letter with her to read in the wood?

Surely she had done all this, and it was not surprising that an unusual amount of self-confidence was the result.

Brother Jabez had the books ready for her. They contained a three-volumed discourse: "On a soul born to tribulation—baptised in the waters of Marah—nourished on roots out of dry ground."

Rachel took them, then walked down through the village, and out at the wood end, congratulating herself on having escaped the notice of those grey eyes.

But her congratulations were premature. If she had only glanced at the little inn, instead of looking in quite the other direction, she would have seen, close to the open window, reclining on several chairs, the six foot of calm, cool laziness which she was so anxious to avoid. I have said calm and cool. The adjectives were only applicable until she came in sight, and then—well, it is wonderful sometimes to notice what a little thing will overcome the immense amount of inertia some people possess.

Fred Carson was on his feet before you could say—what he said when he saw her.

He seemed on the point of hurrying after her when a sudden thought struck him; he remained where he was till she was out of the range of any inquisitive eyesight pertaining to the village folk. Then he lost no time, but with firm, swift steps, soon gained the entrance to the wood.

Rachel wandered on some distance, not keeping to any path, till she reached her favourite nook, just half-way down the little wooded glen through which the stream ran.

It was a very pretty spot. Here and there the water ran in and out between great moss-covered boulders, and then settled down into clear, deep pools; where you caught the reflection of passing clouds overhead, or of your own face as you bent to watch the little pebbles roll one over another.

A sudden turn brought one to a tolerably open space that the waters did not cover, and to the entrance to a cave. Rachel half lay down on the grass and moss just inside, and making the "Dry roots" and "Waters of Marah" into an elbow-cushion, she listened to the distant echo of falling drops somewhere. Drop, drop, drop, they fell, with a low, liquid sound that was inexpressibly soothing, and harmonised well with the humming of the insects outside, and murmuring ripple of the water below. It was the very air to build

castles in, and for a little time she lay and revelled in this undying style of architecture. Presently she gave a half-sigh and raised her head to look round—to see Fred Carson standing about three feet from her. He was leaning against a rock, and so quietly that there was no room left to doubt of his having been there some time ; of his having both seen and heard her. Of the latter he made no secret. His first words as she rose to her feet were :—

“Don’t you wish that our future were like those waters : so clear that we could see far away into it ; see what amount of mischief a storm would be likely to make, what projections would be most likely to be thrown down, how many loose pebbles at the bottom would not be able to stand firm ?”

Fred Carson never showed his rare tact more clearly than when he quietly, and in a modulated voice, joined in with Rachel’s reveries, giving her time, during his first words, to recover her self-possession.

Rachel had been standing with her eyes fixed on the ground whilst he spoke out a thought which had half been her own ; but when he had finished, she looked up, timidly at first, then more naturally as she met a quiet, composed gaze which could in no wise disturb her.

“Yea, truly,” she said. “The wish has often been my own ; but then, again, I have thought perhaps the distant shadows might cast a gloomy shade on all the brighter days between.”

“But some days might be so bright as nearly to absorb the shadows, Miss Winter ; and after all, it is as well to have them mixed ; we see things better by contrast. Come and look up the glen at the battle which is going on between light and shade just now.”

He took Rachel’s hand, and helped her on to a great stone in the middle of the stream, standing himself on the bank a little behind her.

Rachel stood and gazed at the picture. It was very beautiful, and she loved beauty in any form. She was quite unconscious that her companion was also standing enjoying every detail of what seemed to him by far the most beautiful picture he had ever seen—Rachel herself, with her hat in her hand, and the gold and red sunset light falling on her head and lighting up her face.

Not a thought of running away crossed her mind now. There had been such an entire absence of anything she ought to run away from. That kindly, quiet manner was most reassuring. She decided that her imagination must have played her freaks about that first interview ; there could have been nothing but quiet friendliness.

She turned round after awhile ; her friend was looking up the stream, enjoying the view equally with herself.

Rachel put out her hand of her own accord to be helped back, and allowed him to hold it quietly in his till he had found her a seat to his liking. Mr. Carson threw himself down on the grass at Rachel’s feet, and opened the books she had brought with her. There was an

amused, and yet a little anxious, expression on his face as he looked up and asked : "Are these your favourite studies ?"

Rachel laughed a merry, unconscious laugh, that made him smile in sympathy.

"Nay, indeed they are not," she said. "Was it my conversation which made thee think they would be according to my taste ?"

"No," was the answer ; "it was because they seemed such an utter contradiction to it that I asked you. I see there is a name here—may I ask whether it is yours ?"

"It is my aunt's—Jael Winter ; my name is Rachel."

"For such a Rachel one could serve—" began Fred Carson to murmur to himself. But he stopped abruptly, and continued : "Every-one in the village calls you Rachel ?"

"Yes, the Friends always use the Christian name."

"Then may I take a friend's privilege—Rachel ?" lingering over the name as though he liked it.

"Yea, truly," she answered, her truthful eyes looking unconsciously into his. "When everyone else calls me by it it would seem strange for thee not to do so ; I feel almost as though thou mightest be my brother."

The slightest shade of discomposure passed over Fred Carson's face, and he felt ever so little inclined for the moment to disturb her sisterly feeling. But he let it pass till another time, and taking a small book from his pocket, he asked whether she liked poetry.

"Yea, truly I do," she answered. "We have one old book of Longfellow's, which I know by heart nearly. But I have read no other. The Friends do not read much poetry."

Then Mr. Carson read her some of Tennyson's "Enoch Arden," and the time passed away on wings of beauty and music.

The reader felt all he read, and he intended his listener to feel too.

He must have been satisfied as to the latter, for when, after awhile, he looked up, the brown eyes were full of tears, and a drop fell on to the hand that was resting on her knee.

"Rachel," he said, in a low tone, and then he lifted the little hand to his lips, tenderly and respectfully, as though she had indeed been his sister.

"It is time I went home," said Rachel, with a glow on her, not of the sunset this time.

Mr. Carson rose, picked up her books, and almost in silence helped her over the stones, till they reached the end of the glen. Then as he said good-bye, he made her promise to come and hear the end of Enoch Arden, the next evening if it were possible.

And Rachel went the next evening, and many a time after that. Mistress Jael took a second cold, which proved more obstinate than the first, and for full three weeks she was unable to leave the house.

Those were three pleasant weeks for Rachel. All harm in meeting her friend seemed quite done away with by his quiet, unconscious manner; he preserved a happy medium of respect and care, with perhaps just a tinge of authority. Whatever he asked her to do, she did willingly, and he never seemed to anticipate a refusal. Many a beautiful poem he read to her, and generally a tale of love in one form or another, but he never again raised her hand to his lips, or allowed look or word to disturb her; and that is saying very much for Fred Carson's self-control.

Many a time as he watched Rachel's face with its swift beautiful changes he had hard work to keep from betraying the unbrotherly nature of his own feelings. But he did resist, and until the last week Rachel deceived herself into thinking that the mutual pleasure they found in each other's society was simply platonic.

But that last week somewhat opened her eyes.

Mr. Carson was helping her one evening as usual down the glen, when she stumbled against the trunk of a tree which had fallen across the stream, and the next instant he had lifted her up; she was in his arms; a few quick, strong words of endearment passed his lips; then Rachel released herself, said she was not hurt, and they passed on.

But the magical sesame had appeared, and their secret was a secret no longer. Very silently they finished their walk, and still almost in silence they said good-bye.

For the first time Rachel murmured an excuse for not coming the next evening, but Mr. Carson's quietly spoken: "You must, Rachel; promise me you will for this once," was effectual. Rachel gave the promise.

Poor girl! She went home with a veritable chaos of feelings in her heart. Though intense joy was certainly uppermost, there was a slight tinge of annoyance with Mr. Carson for giving her the sight, which in some respects was unwelcome; and then there was repentance towards her aunt Jael and cousin James, together with much anxiety as to what the future would develop.

Then she recollected that Mr. Carson had heard all about Cousin James from her, and a slight doubt haunted her as to the strict honour of his conduct in listening to her secret when he knew the nature of his own feelings. That night and the next day were full of unrest. Her thoughts of the meeting had more of pain than pleasure in them. She resolved to say good-bye, but what the saying of it would cost her she had never realised till now. However, the obstacles to any closer union were too great even to think of. Apart from the sorrow and disappointment which her refusal to marry her cousin would cause, there was another hindrance. Mr. Carson was not a Friend, and she fully believed that no choice of hers that fell on anyone outside their own sect would be for a moment tolerated.

Wearily turning all this over in her mind, she wended her way to the wood at the appointed time.

Mr. Carson was waiting. He shook hands with her, then silently led the way to the spot which would be so doubly dear to her now.

When they got there, they both stood for a moment, still silent, Rachel with her grave eyes resting on the stream; he with his eyes fixed on her face, studying the traces of last night's conflict, and reading the sad determination written about her mouth.

Rachel longed for him to speak—anything would be better than that dreadful silence; if he would not break it, she must.

"Mr. Carson!"

"Rachel!"

"I have come to bid thee good-bye."

And then in spite of all her efforts her lips would quiver.

"Rachel, I will not say good-bye; you know that would be impossible! I ought to have told you before, perhaps, but I thought latterly you could hardly help seeing that I loved you; that you had become the one most precious thing in my life. Did you not know this? Did your own heart not tell you?"

"I thought of thee-as of a dear brother," faltered Rachel; "otherwise, I dare not have thought of thee at all. Thou knewest that I was promised to Cousin James, and——"

"And now you intend marrying Cousin James," said Mr. Carson with a tinge of bitterness in his tone. "You think more of Cousin James, whom you have never seen, than you do of me. I am an outsider, a man of the world—not a Friend, and you cannot love a man who is not a Friend. Or is it I myself whom your heart will not make room for? Rachel, speak to me! Is it so?"

Just then, words of her aunt Jael flashed across her mind. "Say nay, before it is too late! Your love will but minister to his vanity."

But the truth of Mr. Carson's words made itself felt. She *knew* he was honest and sincere in it all, and that made it all the harder to speak the inevitable good-bye.

For a long time the conflict between love and duty waged fierce warfare in her heart. Mr. Carson's only reply to all her arguments was that he would not let her go; and there was so much power in the quiet, firm tones of his voice, and such strong determination in his face, mingled with its unutterable love, that Rachel's power of resistance began to fail.

It is always better for a woman when love and duty go together, but in Rachel's case it was particularly so. Love would ever be the strongest influence with her, and now it was not so much a question of right and wrong as of the old love for her aunt and father, and of the new love which seemed to have gained in strength what it had lost in time.

And then there was her will (which was none of the strongest)

in opposition to his, which from being omnipotent with himself was generally all powerful with those around him.

Rachel dropped her colours at last, and went heart and soul over to the enemy.

And it was quite time ; she was very weary. Hers was not a nature to stand such warfare long, and the strong, loving protection she found came very gratefully to her. No doubt about its ever being used to crush her ever entered her mind. Of course the little glen became a paradise, and this Adam and Eve rejoiced greatly in its sweetness, and their joy found beautiful expression.

But the sun will not stand still even to listen to so new a tale as this. The shadows deepened about the rocks, and round the great stones, and the evening mist hid the flowers and bracken ; a cooler wind began to rustle through the trees. Mr. Carson folded Rachel's shawl about her, and as she turned for home, he said half-sadly :

"Do you know, my darling, I must really say good-bye to-night for a short time. To-morrow, early, I must leave Allerslie for a while, but I need not tell you that I shall not linger the moment I am able to return."

Rachel turned to him. The brightness had vanished from her face and it had grown so white that, before the words passed her lips, Mr. Carson felt obliged to bring some colour back again.

"Oh, Fred, thou must not leave me !"

"Rachel, I would not if it were possible for me to stay. You would not have me neglect my duty ?"

"Hast thou not made me neglect mine ?"

"No ; at least not exactly. A woman's duty is where her heart is ; a man must bring his heart to his duty."

"Wherefore must thou go ?"

"Can you trust me for the answer till I return ?"

"Yea, truly, if I must I can," said Rachel. "But supposing Cousin James comes first—what shall I do ? Thou knowest I would not marry him, but my heart fails me when I think of the rest. Thou hast given thy love to a very coward, Fred. I shall need thee just then, oh, so much."

"Rachel," replied Mr. Carson, "I must let you go"—an on-looker would scarcely have judged those were his present intentions—"but, again, will you believe me, and trust me to fulfil my promise, when I say if Cousin James appears he shall not be here before I am ?"

"I will trust thee for all," was the answer ; and the answer met with the reception it deserved.

But farewell had to be said at last, and Rachel returned home to watch and wait. She had promised Mr. Carson to leave all explanations for him to make to her aunt when he came, and in truth she dared not have made them herself.

No letters were to come ; Mistress Jael must have seen them ; it was to be all trust.

And such it was for a long time. Many weeks passed, the two months which were to have ended his absence had nearly drawn to a close, and Rachel went about the house with a new light on her face, and such a happy ring in her voice, that Mistress Jael wondered what had come to the child; and even Brother Jabez's solemn face brightened into a smile when she came near.

Sometimes anxious thoughts would force themselves on her mind; thoughts of what might be the sequel to it all, thoughts of the arrival of Cousin James, which was to be just a month after Fred's return. But as a rule the great joy of thinking he would be there swallowed up everything else. She left it with him to make all things straight. It was the consciousness of his power which had drawn her to him in the first instance, and she believed it would stand her in good stead now.

But the brightest anticipations are seldom realised in the way we expect. Two months passed, and the eager watcher at that little garden-gate watched in vain. She had pictured so often what the meeting would be like. Where she should be, and what he would say. Sometimes she thought of it as at the gate there—she would see that brown hat down the road, and hear his quick, firm step get gradually nearer, while she herself would keep behind the hedge.

Sometimes she imagined it all in their own little nook. It would be another sunset time, and he would come upon her suddenly and say "Rachel," and she would answer, "I did not expect thee."

But these were only fancies, passing sweet; he had not come really. Perhaps to-morrow would bring him.

And so she waited on, hoping for each to-morrow; her heart growing sick and faint the while against her will; and what made it a thousand times worse was that Cousin James would soon be here, and though she would never marry him, yet it would be hard to tell all by herself.

Mistress Jael could not understand her niece at all. She had suddenly seemed so much brighter and happier, and now all trace of sunshine seemed to have vanished from her face; she even looked ill. And to be like that just when she should have looked her best!

The older lady turned it all over in her mind, and could only come to one natural conclusion: that Rachel was feeling nervous at being almost bound to marry a man whom she had never seen, and was so soon to meet. She talked to her and told her that though it was the dearest wish of her heart, yet her inclinations would not be forced in any way; she would be left entirely free in the matter.

A tithe of the burden on Rachel's heart was lessened, but still there was Fred Carson's absence. She wondered what had happened to him—so many things were possible. She never doubted once of his truth and faith with her. The days passed on as days will, whether we want them to stay or are weary with their length.

One morning Rachel awoke to the fact that that day was to bring her cousin. She went through her household duties mechanically,

dreading the time to come, fearing she knew not what. Suddenly, towards evening, her fear took the form of flight. She felt the house become unbearable, and quickly as her steps would carry her she hurried down to the glen.

It was not a propitious thing to do, if she had stayed to think—taking refuge from the second lover in the trysting-place of the first. But she didn't, couldn't think just then of anything but escape.

It was another sunset-time; the place was filled with its golden glory. The stone in the middle of the stream on which Rachel had stood that night looked like a fragment of a rainbow.

Rachel stepped on to it, and gazed with full eyes and fuller heart on the well-known scene. She stood there a long time; the light grew less intense; then the shadows came out; the wind grew chilly. A passing shiver roused her. She turned with a sigh that was nearly a sob to go back, when—had she been dreaming so long that she could not awake? Or was it Fred who stood on the bank holding out his hand to help her just as he had done before?

She did not long remain undecided, but placed her hand in his, whether shadow or reality, and in another second was gathered in his arms. When she had a chance of speaking, she said: "Oh, Fred! I thought thou wouldst not come; my heart had grown so heavy waiting for thee!"

"Why, my darling," was the answer with more than the usual accompaniments, "did you doubt me?"

"Nay, truly, never," she replied. "I only doubted the circumstances that might have prevented thee. And now, my aunt—wilt thou tell her? And Cousin James—he will have come!"

"I am going now to Mistress Jael. It is too cold for you to stay here longer, much as I should like to keep you. Cousin James has come. I saw him as I stood a moment at the garden-gate to ask where you had gone."

"Oh, has he come?" exclaimed Rachel, and she made an involuntary movement nearer her lover, as though seeking protection from something.

Mr. Carson was not irresponsive. "What is he like? Like Brother Jabez?"

"No; at least, the likeness is not striking," was the answer, given with a slight smile. "But you know I could not stay to look at him when I knew where you were."

"Thou didst notice, though, that he was little?"

"Not very."

"Oh, well, I think an ugly head on a big man is worse than on a little one; we see it more."

"But I don't think he is exactly what you would call ugly," answered Fred, carefully suppressing a smile this time. "Indeed, I am afraid you may fall in love with him at first sight, more than you did with me."

"I did not fall in love with thee at first sight!" echoed Rachel, trying unsuccessfully to look dignified.

"Yea, truly, and thou didst, thou little puritan. I saw it in thy eyes, in thy sweet deception of thyself afterwards. But I have no right to talk; I was thine entirely from that first evening, and I knew it."

"Then it was very deceitful of thee to do as thou didst, and I doubt whether I should believe thee now."

"Rachel, shall you love Cousin James?"

"Oh! Fred, thou knowest!" was the answer, given with a suspicion of tears.

Fred spent about five minutes in demonstrating the fact that he did know, and then they turned their faces homewards.

There was no sign of Cousin James when they reached the house; only old Miriam met them, and to Rachel's great astonishment expressed no surprise but offered to conduct Mr. Carson to Aunt Jael.

Rachel stayed to hear the sitting-room door open and close, then she ran up to her old seat in the staircase window, and sat looking out watching the lengthening shadows, and one or two pale stars that were beginning to glimmer.

A great longing for the mother's love she had never known filled her heart. If she could only have laid her head on her mother's knee and told her all; told her how great her love was, and how it made all she was doing seem quite right, because it was the greatest influence in her life; far greater to her than the disappointment would be to her aunt and cousin. And then she could have told her mother what the man she loved was like, how true and brave and strong he was, and how he loved her.

Poor little Rachel, she had had no great proof of his goodness, except that she loved and believed in it; but there are worse things to judge by than a pure woman's instinct; and hers was yet fresh and strong as when God gave it her.

The cool night air came in at the open window, rich with the scent of jessamine and honeysuckle, and the breath of many other flowers below, and it seemed as though it would have cooled her hot face, or soothed her troubled spirit if it had been possible. "Mother, mother, if thou wert but with me!" was her cry as she bent her head down low on the window-sill.

Just then a hand was laid on her shoulder. Aunt Jael was by her side—that is, if this woman with glistening eyes and softened mouth could be Aunt Jael.

"Rachel, my child, my own daughter, wilt thou learn to call me mother, if not for my sake, for another's?"

"But," stammered Rachel, after she had risen to her feet and given her own impulsive answer to this unexpected appeal. "But, aunt, do you know ——"

"I know all ; more than thou knowest," was the answer, and taking the girl's hand in hers, Mistress Jael led her downstairs into the room she had just left.

Rachel had no time to think ; she just held her breath and waited.

They entered the room. Someone was standing in the dusky recess of the window—it had grown too dark to distinguish more than the bare outlines, but those outlines raised a tumult in Rachel's heart that threatened to choke her. Aunt Jael passed her arm around her waist, and said with a thrill of real joy in her stern voice :

"This is thy cousin James, Rachel ; this is my boy. I have told him he would never have thy hand without thy heart went with it, and he claims them both ! James, take her."

The figure at the window moved quickly towards her, but not before the timely moon, which just then broke through the clouds, had lit up the face and form of Fred Carson.

"Can you forgive me the deception ? My mother has done so, and will e'en accept her son though he is not a Friend. Can you forgive me for wanting my wife to come to me of her own free will, because she could not help it ?"

"But I did say I would not marry Cousin James," murmured Rachel ; "thou wouldst not have me break my word ?"

"You promised to marry me, little one, and that will make it straight."

"Fred," said Rachel, after awhile, "if I could have looked into the waters of my life that day, I should have seen a golden nugget thrown into them, so bright and beautiful that it seemed to cast its tint on all around."

"And if I read your allegory aright," said Fred, "the golden nugget never looked so bright and pure until the waters of your life washed over it. But what didst thou see in the pool that day ? Something that cast a very warm reflection, for I watched thee."

"I think thou knowest," was the answer.



FAIR NORMANDY.

BY CHARLES W. WOOD, F.R.G.S., AUTHOR OF "THROUGH HOLLAND,"
"LETTERS FROM MAJORCA," ETC. ETC.

WE left Dreux full of thought of our strange adventure. The time had passed with inconceivable rapidity. We had enjoyed nothing so much in Normandy. H. C. declared that never had anything made so profound an impression upon him. The last words of our mysterious guide—mysterious no longer—rang in our ear. Her confidence had not extended to H. C., and our conversation, altogether carried on in French, had been a sealed book to him; but he had felt the strange influence, and knew that a singular disclosure had been made. For the time he abstained from questioning; but I knew before long I should have to choose between confession and the tortures of the rack.

The night was dark; but as we went onward, the heavy atmosphere seemed to clear, and the stars came out large and brilliant. As we approached Chartres, some of its striking features might be traced. The cathedral spires pointing upwards were clearly outlined against the background of the night sky. Perched on a steep hill above the town, they seemed to reach the heavens.

The train steamed into the station. The night had turned chilly, and there was a suspicion of frost in the air. H. C. counted his nine and twenty brown paper packages twice over, and then walked off with the air of a man of possessions. I was condescendingly permitted to carry a few of the less valuable art-treasures: the pottery portion of the collection, whilst he took charge of the finer porcelain. Not having all his affection for old china, he declared that my carelessness in handling the precious objects amounted to barbarism and irreverence. His own love for these things amounts to china worship. The more antediluvian their appearance, and the more grotesque, the greater his rapture. I have seen him go down on his knees in silent contemplation of a Chinese monster, all eyes and mouth and dragon's teeth and impossible contortions; he has become fairly charmed and mesmerised; his head has nodded like a Chinese mandarin; and a glow and a grin have suffused his countenance until you could have declared that the dragon's grin and contortions were infectious, and that an extremely interesting conversation was going on between the two. It would form, in fact, a sort of tableau vivant, and Beauty and the Beast was its interpretation.

The omnibus of the Hôtel du Grand Monarque was waiting at the station. The conductor seeing H. C. staggering along under his burdens (a sort of Study in Brown) hastened to his assistance. Fairly landed within, the conductor having obtained the registered luggage

by means of the ticket, we rattled off. History repeats itself, especially in the matter of hotel omnibuses tearing through the streets of these old French towns.

But at a first glance it was evident that Chartres was very different from Evreux. The streets seemed very tortuous, though quite as sleepy and deserted. Yet it was difficult to judge, for we had no sooner left the station than we arrived at the inn, which was well situated in a large, open, irregular square. Our short omnibus journey, moreover, had been less interesting. We had had it to ourselves. No freighted lady had entered, to be deposited half way in the arms of lovely and enchanting syrens. No door had closed upon a domestic tableau from which we felt ourselves painfully excluded.

The Hôtel du Grand Monarque was somewhat primitive looking. There was a want of style about it that was very refreshing. Here evidently dwelt no glass of fashion or mould of form. We should not have to dress for dinner.

Of course there was the usual *porte cochère*, and from its hospitably wide gates issued the landlord, who immediately addressed us in English. Is this instant recognition to be taken as a compliment? Somehow we always feel rather taken down. The tone seems to imply that being English we are inferior beings, and cannot be conversant even with the elegances of the French language.

Our host, however, was amiable (when are French hosts otherwise?), and assured us that we were welcome, and that all he possessed was at our disposal. This sounded so very Spanish that we wondered whether he had ever lived under the shadow of the mosques and minarets of some fair City of the South.

The Grand Monarque proved a quiet French country inn, of the good old sort. Fashion and ceremony were dispensed with. Carpets were at a premium, but the floors were white and well kept. It was a very different inn from that at Evreux; less straggling and rambling; and we searched for the kitchen and the chef in vain. These could only be approached through *monsieur's* office and *madame's* *sanctum*; and as yet we did not feel ourselves sufficiently privileged to beard the lions in their den. Once become "*enfants de la maison*" with these good people, and they find you charming, and you find them charming; nothing you do is a liberty, and no amount of invasion is an intrusion. You may command, and obedience follows as certainly as the sunshine draws the shower.

Our room upstairs had a balcony, and we threw wide the windows. Before us in the darkness stood the Place, large and straggling. Lights gleamed from some of the houses; but most of them were dark and closed, as if the inmates had retired for the night. From this point we caught no sign of the cathedral; no traces of antiquity were visible; Chartres really seemed somewhat tame and commonplace; but we would not judge too hastily. Evreux had disclosed unsuspected charms: Chartres might do the same.

We went down to the *salle-à-manger*—a very different room from that at Evreux. It was small and square, with a sanded floor, brilliantly lighted with gas, and warmed to a tropical heat. At a table in the corner sat a French lady and a little girl, fellow-travellers from Dreux; in the same train, but not the same compartment. They had not accompanied us in the omnibus, so must have walked from the station. From their conversation we discovered that they were aunt and niece: and the niece was a troublesome and detestable little monkey. She was ugly too, which is unpardonable. Some children are evidently born to be penances for the sins of those with whom they come into contact; but the infliction is out of all proportion with the sin. In the present instance both were eating soup, evidently having a race as to which could dispose of it most quickly and with the greatest sound. Fortunately it was soon over, and our agony was short-lived.

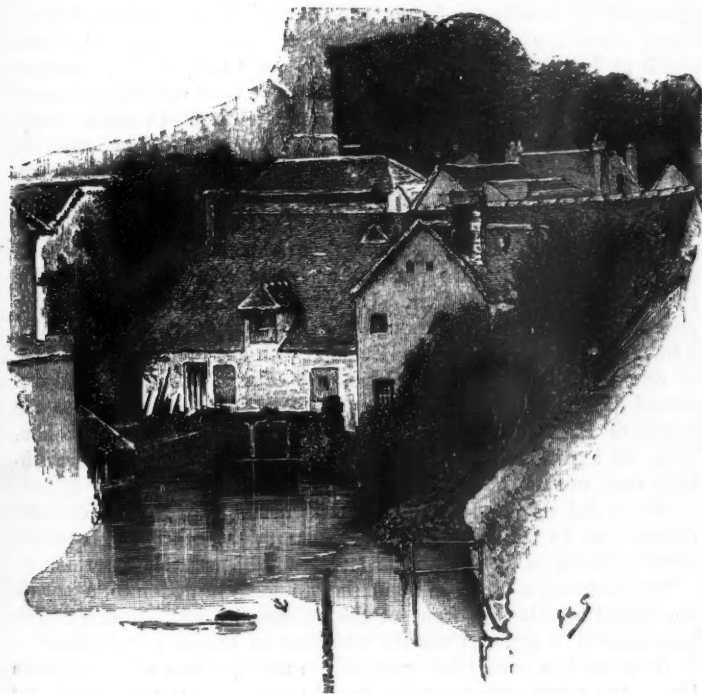
We noticed that a private code of signals existed between the aunt and niece: a sort of domestic semaphore. If anything attracted the intelligent child's observation: if, for instance, we were guilty of the eccentricity of taking bread or drinking wine: she immediately kicked the aunt under the table; and as soon as the aunt had gathered the niece's meaning, she signified the same by putting on an evil leer. In short, they were curious people, and we were glad when they departed.

At the opposite side of the room, at a large table, sat ten or a dozen Frenchmen, evidently forming a small and select coterie, having arrived at that stage of the repast when coffee is handed round. They were full of conviviality, as befitted the hour and the occasion. What the latter was we wondered. We could not quite make them out either. They were evidently at home; as evidently they did not live at the inn. They were not commercial travellers: that was certain. One moment we thought them young doctors; but the small town of Chartres could scarcely give work for a dozen practitioners, however leisurely they might take their own life—and that of their patients; and even if it did, they would scarcely find themselves assembled at the Grand Monarque, unless it was a more ceremonious event than their present undress indicated. Next we put them down as barristers, until we remembered that Chartres was not an assize town, and that a congregation of learned gentlemen would scarcely find an occasion for their presence in the old ecclesiastical city.

The landlady solved the mystery when they had all taken their departure, and the aunt and niece had followed in their wake—the latter turning round and making a face at us as she vanished through the door—leaving us in possession of the room. They were masters at the Lycée, said our hostess; learned professors of the most learned Academy of Chartres. They dined there regularly *en pension* all the year round; and she would rather lose by them than not have them; for they enlivened the place, and conferred dignity upon it by

their attendance. The dignity must have been a very "reflected light," we thought, for their behaviour at table, though very entertaining, had certainly had nothing of the staid or the severe about it: whilst some of them were dressed almost in the proverbial tatters that learned professors delight in.

Here we were not attended to by electrified waiters, as at Evreux, but the fair hostess herself supplied our necessities; dividing her labours with a fossil, who might have been electrified in his younger



CHARTRES.

days, but was now little better than a galvanised mummy. He was, nevertheless, very civil and obliging, and we became very good friends. The landlady did credit to her larder. She was large and stout, and walked about with that comfortable vibration which is so suggestive of good temper and a jelly about to fall to ruins. But like many stout people, she moved easily and her footstep was inaudible. She went about like a ghost, though in her case the position was reversed and she was very distinctly the substance of a shadow.

In due time we also reached the coffee period of the repast, and

left the dining-room. The lights were extinguished and it fell into darkness and repose. We went out into the night. The air was clear and frosty; the stars were cold and brilliant. As at Evreux, so here economy seemed to reign, and the streets were in comparative gloom. Very few gas-lights shed abroad their cheerful rays, which always help to make darkness visible, if they do nothing more. We have not yet fallen upon the halcyon days of universal electric lighting. When we do, we shall look back upon these primitive days of unwholesome and unsteady gas, as we now look back in imagination upon the days when rushlights were the fashion, and our grandmothers prided themselves upon the art of snuffing candles. Here, however, darkness had it all its own way. The inhabitants of Chartres are peaceable and garrotters are unknown. The cats alone hold revelry, and duets and choruses make night hideous. From a few houses there streamed forth the light of a modest candle, faint and glimmering, as if in apology for neglecting the curfew; and here and there an industrious and enterprising shopkeeper had not yet put up his shutters.

One of these happened to be a confectioner's, and H. C. immediately turned in and invested largely in chocolate. Chocolate and china are, in fact, his two pet weaknesses, and he is quite as unable to resist the one as the other. Unfortunately china is less easily disposed of than chocolate, though the latter produces more mischief. I have known him return to England with a complexion the colour of one of his own majolica plates, the effect of chocolate and disturbed digestion: and once he was obliged to have recourse to the waters of Harrogate before his natural complexion returned to him. This, as a rule, is a combination of the lily and the rose: the cabbage rose, not the Maréchal Neil.

But it did us good service in this instance, for the confectioner directed us to the cathedral, which we might otherwise have had some difficulty in finding. The streets were absolutely deserted.

We mounted a steep hill, and before long turned into a square and found ourselves in front of the building we had so often and so long desired to see. It was the fulfilment of one of our dreams.

As yet only a partial fulfilment, for in the darkness all details were lost. We could only trace the broad outlines of the cathedral, but they were sufficient to show us its massiveness and magnificence. Standing on a height, yet somewhat too surrounded by houses, it looked strangely silent and solemn under the quiet night sky. There was not a sound in the air; not a light gleamed from any window; nothing disturbed a repose that might have been that of the ages. As far as we could see the west front was plain and unadorned, but the spires towered above, and in the gloom seemed to meet the sky and hold commune with the stars.

As we looked a bird flew out from one of the towers, and we wondered what had broken its rest in all this solemn stillness. It darted over the body of the cathedral, eastward, as though, tired of

the darkness and gloom, it would wander off to meet the far-off dawn "which paints the eastern skies." Or perhaps it had been amongst the tombs, holding converse with the dead, and was hieing with a message to some distant star. For who knows all that is passing around us; all the mysteries of the unseen and spiritual world; the silent work that may be going on, the unspoken messages that may be carried to and fro, sealing our fate or controlling our destinies? We can discern nothing and we know nothing; our eyes are withheld; we are of those who, this side the veil, see through a glass darkly.

There were a few trees within high walls, and every now and then as we passed without they waved and murmured, and the cold still air seemed full of mysterious whispers. The houses were dwarfed by the cathedral; the whole aspect of the surroundings was that of an old-fashioned close. We were high above the town; and if the air blew keen and cold, it was no wonder. We shivered as we stood before the great south doorway, and tried to make out something of its richness and grandeur. It is more beautiful than many west fronts, and more than makes up for the severity of its own, but to-night we could only gain a faint impression of what it might be by daylight.

It was growing late and we left the cathedral to its solemn, death-like repose, and wandered back into the town. We went down the narrow thoroughfare, all dark and wrapped in the mystery of night, and presently found ourselves in the old square, and in front of the Grand Monarque.

Everyone now seemed to have obeyed the curfew summons, and darkness reigned. The great doorway was closed, and our appeal for admission was answered by the host himself, who seemed to be keeping vigil over his account books in his bureau. Let us hope the balance between debit and credit was—as it deserved to be—very much in his favour. It is said that people in this world seldom meet their deserts: the saying has almost become a proverb: but is it so? It is difficult to believe that he who starts in life on the straight road and takes for his motto the old pilot's advice "Fear not, but trust in Providence," will at the end of many days find his account against him.

To-night, as we could see very little of the old town, and as it was growing late, we wisely retired. Our host himself escorted us to our room, carrying the light, and solicitous for our comfort. It was a long room, somewhat barely furnished, after the manner of so many of the French hotels. But it is a fault on the right side: too much luxury is enervating. There was, of course, the usual door communicating with the next room, but to-night we had no neighbours, hysterical or otherwise.

The next morning rose fair and bright. The place was flooded with sunshine. It was an influence not to be resisted, and we went down with the high spirits of those who carry easy consciences.

The breakfast-room was in possession of the aunt and niece, at the very same little table in the very same corner. We sat as far as possible from them, and for once the charms of the fair sex failed to make any impression upon H. C.

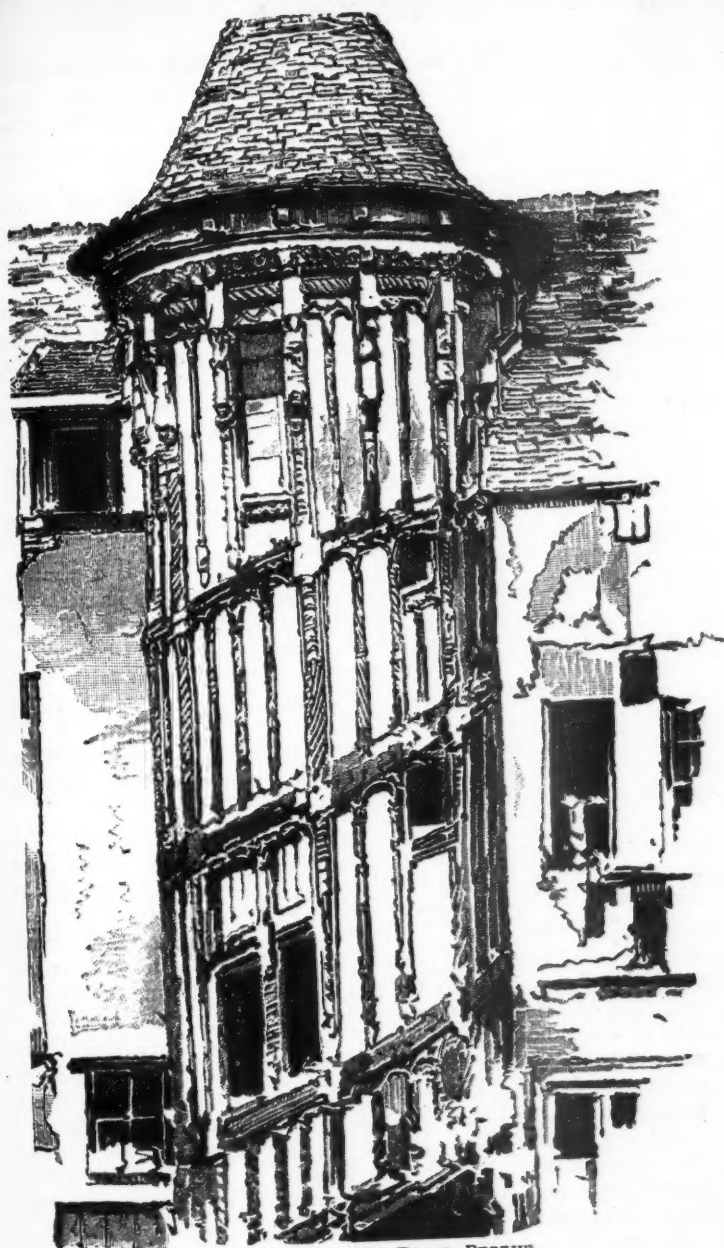
Our galvanised mummy waited upon us, beginning the ceremony with a sort of elastic grin, which made his face look like india-rubber, and was his way of saying good-morning; but as he brought us the most delicious hot rolls and excellently brewed tea, we forgave him any small eccentricities in which he indulged. He was evidently a privileged individual: an appendage of the inn, that would have to be taken over with other fixtures if ever the lease changed hands: and for such people, no matter what their peculiarities—short of a mania for arson or murder—one should have a great respect. Water will find its own level, and a many years' servitor must have great virtues: unless, indeed, the virtues are transcendently on the other side. We all know John's answer to his master upon receiving warning: an answer now recorded in history. "Sir," replied the faithful John, "if you don't know when you've a good servant, I know when I've a good master, and I refuse to leave." The very same thing happened about two years ago to the present writer; but in this instance the parallel was brought about not by the virtues of the master (which are, no doubt, conspicuous) but by the obstinacy of the servant, who, also, as in the above case, gained the day. "*J'y suis, j'y reste*," said Dumas, though I think he was only echoing the famous saying of a yet more famous man: a better rendering of the old assertion that Possession is nine points of the law.

It was a warm, sunny morning, more like an August than an October day. The sky was blue and cloudless, and we could scarcely realise that last night had been so cold and frosty. We passed through the narrow, tortuous streets of Chartres, and, gradually ascending, soon found ourselves on the summit of the hill, facing the cathedral. It was the reverse to Evreux, and daylight added to its effect.

It has been said that if you took the towers of Chartres, the nave of Amiens, and the portal of Rheims, you would have the finest cathedral in the world. Those who have seen all three cathedrals will readily believe that such a grouping of architecture could scarcely be rivalled.

Yet as regards Chartres, magnificent as are its bell-towers and spires, so beautiful is the whole building that it seems almost impossible to give the preference to one portion over another. If it has a fault, it is that its west front is too plain and severe, and that its ornamentation borders on the grotesque; yet this is more than made up by the richness, the beauty and size of the south doorway, with its pointed gothic arch surmounted by its magnificent rose-window, and the flight of steps leading into the interior. The north doorway is also wonderfully beautiful.

As we stood before the west front, its very severity seemed to add



ESCALIER DE LA REINE BERTHE.

to the grandeur of the unequal towers and the elegance of the spires. They have wonderfully stood the test of time. There were no signs of age about them ; no weather-beaten traces. The "Clocher Vieux," more than seven hundred years old, might have been built in the present day.

The whole cathedral is one of the most substantial as well as one of the most beautiful in the world. Its buttresses look as if they would stand the test, not of centuries, but of ages a thousand times multiplied.

Perhaps this new, almost modern aspect of the exterior is at first a little disappointing, for it has almost a look of restoration. All the beauty of age is wanting : the discoloured walls, the lights and shades which mark the lapse of time almost as surely as a dial records the passing moments ; the rounded corners and crumbling niches and imperfect images. These marks add so much to the effect of an ancient building ; appealing to the imagination, throwing over all an air of beauty and refinement that nothing else will give. They form the poetry and romance of architecture, and affect the mind with a certain sadness that possibly is "akin to pain."

The exterior of Chartres has none of all this. It is a giant of strength, and its youth seems everlasting. Some of its images, it is true, are chipped and broken ; others have altogether disappeared ; but the sharp edges have none of the crumbling of fine lace-work, so characteristic, for instance, of Rouen. Here, a mason might have gone round and chiselled away what is now imperfect ; and it might all have been done within a lifetime.

But Chartres has been occasionally restored ; and like everything else, it was more beautiful before its restoration than now. Nothing that is new equals the work of the Dark Ages.

How is this ? The difference is not the effect of time alone ; the present day cannot achieve the greatness of the past ; hands have lost their cunning ; genius is not hereditary, and the giant capacities for great efforts have not been handed down to posterity.

The "Clocher Vieux" of Chartres is more than seven hundred years old, as we have said ; yet, as M. Viollet-le-Duc remarks in his interesting work : "On n'y voit pas une lézarde, pas une échancrure, quoi qu'il ait été colliné intérieurement par deux terribles incendies." And of the cathedral he adds : "Il n'y a pas une seule des pierres de la cathédrale qui ne soit saine, solide, adhérente aux autres, comme si elle avait été posée hier : elles ont essuyé six à sept cents hivers comme un jour : le temps s'est incliné devant elles, et a passé outre."

All this is literally true ; and as we gaze upon Chartres, we feel that almost it might be a modern building in everything except its magnificence and grandeur, the splendour of its outlines, the glory of its perfection.

In position, it could not be better placed. It stands upon the summit of a steep hill, rising above the town, which surrounds it on

all sides and reaches to its very walls. The little close, of which it is the centre, has no special feature of quaintness or originality. But just without it you look down upon slopes covered with houses, here and there made green and picturesque by waving trees and creeper-covered walls, and windows bright with autumn flowers. The Eure runs at the bottom, surrounding the town as it were with a moat, adding beauty and picturesqueness to the scene; washing the very foundations of the *Porte Guillaume*, the only remaining gate of the seven that once gave entrance to Chartres.

Beyond all this stretch, far as the eye can reach, the wide and fertile plains of La Beauce, a province now absorbed in the Department of the Eure et Loir, whose fertility and careful cultivation make the neighbourhood one of the granaries of France. Hence, to this day, Chartres is famous for its corn market, which is held here every Saturday; and is the only time when the town shows signs of bustle and animation.

Far and near the lofty steeples of Chartres are conspicuous, full of grace and beauty. The north spire is considered the most perfect example of its kind known in France, perhaps in the world. For centuries they have been landmarks. But they have gone through vicissitudes, have passed through wreck and ruin, through "flood and flame." A great deal of wood was first employed in their construction, and they have often been struck by lightning. In every storm they were the most exposed, the most likely to fall victims to the "fire from heaven."

The cathedral was founded in the third century on the site, says tradition, of a Druid sanctuary, where the Druids had worshipped the Virgin, by prophetic inspiration. Very soon after that early epoch Chartres became the scene of ever-increasing pilgrimages: was, indeed, almost if not quite the first church to which pilgrimages were made; and the "black Virgin" became celebrated throughout France and the whole civilized Roman Catholic world. It was in 1194 that the building became a prey to the flames, and nothing escaped excepting the crypt, the west front, and its towers.

In 1260 the cathedral was rebuilt of stone, and the people declared that henceforth until the day of judgment it had nothing to dread from fire, but would, on the contrary, save from everlasting fire the numerous Christians who had contributed to its restoration. Yet Chartres has since suffered terribly from this very cause. Four cathedrals were burnt before 1194; and the new one, of which the people spoke so confidently, consecrated sixty-four years after in the presence of St. Louis and all his family, has been eight times in flames. The last time was in 1836, when fortunately only the roof suffered.

The Chartrains considered these fires as attacks made by the devil, envious of the church raised to the Virgin. The great fire of 1194 they attributed to demons, whom they saw flying through the air in the form of crows, carrying in their mouths burning coals which

they dropped on to the roof. In this fire everything was destroyed except the crypt and the two towers.

The building of churches in those days was a work of labour and self-denial. The architects worked almost as hard as the men, and earned little more. Jehan de Texies, the architect of the upper part of the "Clocher Neuf," built in 1507, received seven sous a day, the workmen five. The date of the Vieux Clocher, 1194, is found on a window arch near the summit, but the architect is unknown.

The foundations of the church were laid in 1115, and Haymond, Abbé of St. Pierre-sur-Dives, describes how the work went on in his book, "The Miracles of the Blessed Virgin."

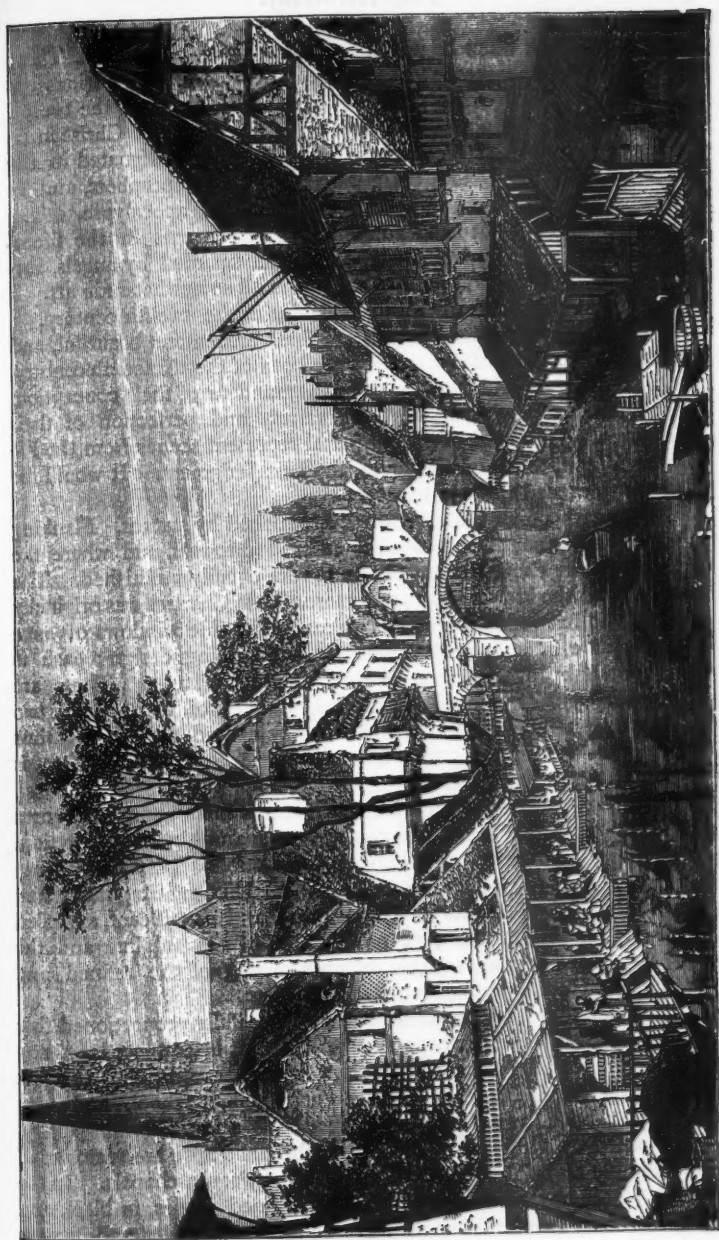
He records that men, proud of their birth and riches, accustomed to a luxurious life of self-indulgence, harnessed themselves to the shafts of a cart, and conveyed up the hill stones, lime, wood, and every material needed for the building of the sacred edifice. Sometimes a thousand persons, men and women, were harnessed to the same cart, so heavy was the load to be dragged up. In spite of the work and the number of people, a profound silence reigned; not a whisper was heard. If they stopped on the road and spoke, it was only of their sins, which they confessed with tears and prayers. The priests made them promise to subdue all hatred and forgive all debts. Anyone sufficiently hardened to be unwilling to forgive his enemies and refuse to submit to these exhortations, was at once unharnessed from the cart and driven out of the holy band of workers.

The quarries from which the stone was brought were at Berchères-l'Evêque, eight kilometres from Chartres, and these bands of devotees had to drag their carts over bad roads and up the steep hill on which Nôtre Dame is built. Some of the blocks used are not less than three metres long by one metre in depth. The custom of thus banding together commenced at Chartres, and soon spread throughout France.

The cathedral is specially dedicated to the Virgin. There is a tradition to the effect that in the life of our Lord a church existed on the site of the cathedral in honour of His Mother, and that she visited it after His death. From the earliest days the Chartrains have refused to permit anyone to be buried in its precincts.

The fire of 1194 spared little beyond the west front, which, therefore, remained the most ancient part of the building. In spite of its severity it has much that is curious and remarkable. It possesses a great central doorway and two side doorways above which rise the matchless towers and steeples. The three doorways are ornamented by a profusion of statuettes, to the number of seven hundred, it has been said; some are injured, some lost by time; and these are surmounted by three gothic windows, filled with magnificent stained glass of the twelfth century. Above them is a rose-window of beautiful and delicate tracery of the thirteenth century.

The central doorway is called the *Porte Royale*, perhaps because it is supported by statues of royal saints; perhaps because Henry IV.



CHERTSEY.

passed through it when he was crowned in Chartres Cathedral. These royal saints are cadaverous-looking and quaintly draped ; curious but not beautiful ; suggestive of the Byzantine sculpture of the twelfth century. High up above the doorway is an image of Christ in an oval, with the symbols of the four evangelists as designated in the vision of Ezekiel. Below these are the fourteen prophets, and in the upper arches the twenty-four elders of the apocalypse. The sculptures of the right hand portal represent passages in the life of the Virgin ; in that of the left, Christ, accompanied by angels, surrounded by the signs of the Zodiac. It is all somewhat rude art.

This west front is nearly all that remains of the twelfth century.

The north and south doorways are finer and more beautiful, and of a far higher style of art. They are both of the thirteenth century, and may fairly be said to astonish by the grandeur of their conception, their richness of ornamentation, the variety and perfection of their sculptures. Those of the north portal represent scenes from the life of the Virgin, those on the south, the Last Judgment. It would be difficult to exceed them in beauty.

Above each porch is a rose-window, enriched by statues. Flanking both north and south doorways are unfinished towers, and where the apse meets the choir rise two more towers equally unfinished. The central unfinished tower makes one more. Thus Chartres was originally intended to have nine towers and spires. The side windows of nave and choir are of a somewhat singular but striking design ; each is surmounted by a small rose-window of great beauty. These are separated by two arched buttresses, unique of their kind ; two enormous quarter-circles, joined by small columned arches, and thus forming, as it were, gigantic fragments of wheels. The effect is somewhat heavy, but original.

But it was perhaps the interior which struck most upon our senses with awe ; commanding at once our reverence and highest admiration. Passing from the garish day into the soft, subdued, exquisite tones thrown by the matchless windows, was indeed like entering into a new world : a world where everything was grand and magnificent, appealed to one's highest emotions, all one's sense of the sublime and the religious, all one was capable of appreciating of the refined and beautiful. Here eternal calm seemed to reign.

The interior is of vast extent, yet so beautifully proportioned that at first its great size is perhaps not realised. It is 428 feet long, 105 feet wide across the nave, 150 feet across the transepts, and 120 feet high. Its architecture is of the early gothic school, and very perfect. Above the arches of the nave runs a low triforium gallery, surmounted by a lofty clerestory. The choir and apse are surrounded by a double ambulatory, the latter adjoined by seven chapels. In the centre of the nave is a labyrinth of intertwined circles, in black and grey marble. It is called *la lieue* ; is 30 feet in diameter, and its path is 970 feet long. Its windings had to be followed on hands and

knees by pilgrims and penitents, and a certain number of prayers said at certain stations : the whole ceremony taking an hour to reach the end of the path. The stations represented beads on the rosary. The Chartrains declare that the statues of the twelve apostles in gold lie buried beneath it. The whole pavement of the nave slopes from the entrance of the choir to the west doorway to a degree of eighty centimetres. This was done to make it easier to clean the church after the visits of the pilgrims, who insisted in sleeping in crowds within the sacred walls.

To stand with your back to the west doorway, looking the whole length eastward, is to gaze upon a vision which can have few parallels.

It is a forest of aisles and arches and vaulted roofs. Over all is a rich, subdued light : the dim religious light that is supposed to conduce to devotion, and most certainly suggests repose. In fact, majesty and repose seem to be the key-notes of the building.

The nave is the longest in France. The effect on first entering is so overwhelming and impressive, that Napoleon the First on seeing it, is said to have exclaimed, "*Un athée doit se trouver mal ici !*" On the other hand, Macaulay declared, "*The cathedral, which was my chief object at Chartres, rather disappointed me—it wants vastness.*" An inconceivable opinion. Whatever may be thought of the exterior, it is impossible to imagine anything more grand and sublime and full of harmony than this interior of Chartres.

The windows, one hundred and thirty in number, are all filled with stained glass, and some of it is matchless. The more we gazed, the more we marvelled and wondered ; we had never seen such tone and colour, such richness and brilliancy combined with an exquisite velvety softness. Most of these windows date from the thirteenth century, but many have had to be restored, thereby losing some of their beauty. But the windows are by no means of equal merit. The three west windows are of the twelfth century, and one of them contains a Tree of Jesse. Almost the whole of sacred history can be read on the walls and windows, for they date back to an age when learning was not universal, and instruction was often gained by sight, symbol and observation. Many of the windows illustrate subjects from the Bible, and legends of the saints, who form so important a part in the Roman Catholic religion. Some of the lower compartments represent trades, and were probably given by the different guilds or corporations which they symbolise.

The choir has double aisles, and a semicircular east end. It is separated from the aisles by a screen ornamented by wonderful gothic sculptures in white marble, of the most minute and elaborate description ; representing passages in the life of Christ and of the Virgin. It is in forty-five compartments of the finest tracery work, some of which has been compared to "point lace in stone." These sculptures were begun in the year 1514 and continued to the middle of the seventeenth century.

Many of the passages in the life of the Virgin are imaginary. One of them represents her death, which took place at her abode on the slopes of Mount Sinai. There, according to tradition and the sculptures, when her last hour came, all the disciples in various parts of the earth were borne on clouds. She is represented lying on her bed, having made her will, in which she commanded St. John to give two of her garments to two maidens present, who had been long with her. One of these garments the Chartrains believe is still in their possession, and they regard it as their greatest treasure and most precious relic.

This relic is called the *Sacra Camisia*, or La Tunique Intérieure, and was given to the church by Charles le Chauve in 876. It is composed of two pieces of white silk, wrapped in a piece of stuff yet finer and more transparent, supposed to have been a veil worn by the Empress Irene and given by her to Charlemagne.

The cathedral partly owed its prestige as a rallying point for pilgrims because it was the earliest church in France dedicated to the Virgin. But it was also in part owing to the presence of the black image of the Virgin: a wonderful image that was supposed to work miracles, and dated from the time (also supposition) when the place was the centre of Druidical worship, as described by Cæsar. The image was kept in the crypt, and was unfortunately burnt, when the crypt was sacked in 1793: unfortunately, for it would have been interesting to see any work of so much antiquity.

There is still a black image of the Virgin said to date back to the twelfth century in the church. This is the object of much superstitious worship. It is gorgeously apparelled; lights are for ever burning near it; it is surrounded by relics, gifts presented by the devoted. It is also supposed to work miracles, and to be efficacious in intercession. It always has worshippers about it; twos and threes, and sometimes crowds. In spite of the candles, the image is somewhat in gloom—but then it is itself black. A railing surrounds it, and a sort of canopy, so that it forms a chapel: the "Chapel of the Virgin," as it is called.

The gates are always open, and those who wish to worship go within the railings; some just within, others approaching quite close to the altar. Their prayer over, they go up and kiss the foot or the dress of the black image. Some kissed it once, we noticed, some twice. We saw strong men, countrymen evidently, with their wives, place their market baskets outside the railings, enter, say a short prayer, kiss the image and come out again; looking the while very conscious and sheepish, as if either they were going through the ordeal against their will and to please their spouses; or as a penance for some particular sin, or a petition for some special favour. At any rate, they seemed supremely clumsy and uncomfortable and out of place.

The image is called La Vierge du Pilier. The chapel is sumptuously decorated. On the 8th of September a grand ceremony

takes place. It is the Festival of the Nativity of the Virgin and of the Dedication of the Cathedral, and children are brought in crowds from all the country round to be blessed by the priest. The chapel is



CATHEDRAL, CHARTRES.

pecially decorated for the occasion, and is resplendent with lights and jewels. Probably a more magnificent robe is placed upon the image; the perfume of incense fills the air.

We wished to see the crypt, which is said to be the largest in France, and went to the sacristan, who dwells outside in the south-east corner of the church. He was not at home, but his better half was equal to the occasion. She was of great size and weight and amiability—these virtues generally go hand-in-hand—and she talked much. Her heart was evidently in her work, and she looked upon her visits into the crypt and cathedral as pilgrimages: penances for her sins. This was very comforting, for as she was naturally recompensed for her trouble, it was an excellent way of making the best of both worlds. But she was a very worthy woman; full of kindly feeling towards her fellow creatures: quite ready to put herself out to do them a kindness, without thought of reward. The world has not yet lost all its good people.

The first time we went to her a children's service was being held in the crypt, and we could not go down. It is held only once a year, and it fell on this particular day. We went again at her own time, and she was ready with the keys. Following our guide, we descended into a subterranean passage which soon led us to the crypt. It was a long, dark, mysterious-looking vault, lighted only by the flaring candle that our guide carried. This cast weird shadows about, and we could almost fancy the place peopled with ghosts of bygone penitential worshippers, and priests concealed in confessional boxes, and cowed monks and hooded nuns; a long procession of every degree and kind, who must all in turn have visited this crypt to worship the image of the Black Virgin, before the days of the great Revolution.

There was an altar immediately on our left as we entered, and, if I remember rightly, a copy of the desecrated image, in the place where the original once stood: but of this I am not absolutely certain. *La Vierge du Pilier* in the chapel above may have had a great effect upon me, and I may unconsciously have multiplied her existence.

The crypt was in itself very effective. It was very long; the ceiling was low; the darkness, lighted only by the faint torch or candle, was telling and mysterious. From the further end the altar lighted up would have looked singularly picturesque, and we wished we could have commanded an illumination.

"Is it not possible?" we asked our guide.

"*Monsieur!*" she objected, in a rich, round voice, "that can only be done for mass, and by order of the priests. It is not a sort of fire-works exhibition, you understand," she added, with a smile.

"But it would be so effective."

"True. It is always effective, and more so when the altar is lighted up. To watch it from the far end of the crypt, with the priest and the boys going through the service—well, you might fancy you were looking at a celestial vision."

"The place seems full of ghosts," we remarked.

"I never come down but I feel the same," she returned, rather to

our surprise. "I feel surrounded by a whole army of ghosts; they seem to pass through the walls, to occupy every chair"—pointing to the rows of chairs on either side that extended some way down the vault. "I believe there *are* ghosts," she added in a loud whisper, that echoed down the long corridor. "But I am not frightened of them. I shall be a ghost myself some day; and why should we dread what we ourselves must become in turn?"

This was philosophy of a high order. But whatever our guide might become in the land of shadows, she was by no means a ghost now, and her shadow was very substantial. All our shadows looked gloomy and aggressive as they flitted down the pavement and over the frescoed walls—curious frescoes of a far-off time.

We were almost glad to return to daylight, and the bright sky and sunshine and wholesome influences. Our guide accompanied us into the cathedral, for we wanted to get into the Chapel of St. Piat, which is behind the high altar, and is kept locked.

More wonderful than ever, after the dark, narrow, confined crypt, looked this vast enclosure, this glorious assemblage of pillars and aisles and vaulted roof and matchless windows, which seemed to fill the space with celestial beams; with colours more gorgeous than tropical flowers, more delicate than the bloom of fruit, more glowing than an eastern dawn.

Our guide swiftly moved down the aisle, and passing round the famous screen, took a key from the wall, and inserted it in the rude door that admitted one into the Chapel of St. Piat. After a little trouble with the lock, the door swung back on its hinges, and we entered.

It is a small chapel, distinct from the cathedral, containing very little that is interesting beyond the stained glass windows. It is used for catechising the children; and at certain times and seasons mass is celebrated. St. Piat is the Patron Saint of the weather, and people come here in the time of harvest to pray for sunshine.

"But they don't always get it," our guide quaintly added, with what sounded very much like a touch of dry humour.

"Why not?" we asked.

"Dame! I don't know. Perhaps they don't deserve it, and he is angry. Or perhaps he is not listening. There may be many reasons. I am not there, so I cannot tell you. Have you seen the Black Virgin?" she asked, as we left the chapel and went back into the church.

"Yes," we answered. "It is a very curious image."

"She is very beautiful," returned our guide. "But whilst they were about it, I wish they had made her white instead of black. Poor thing! how she was insulted at the Revolution of '39. Imagine! a wicked workman put her on the bonnet-rouge, the symbol of their lawless work. But it saved her from destruction. The wretches were so pleased at the effect that they left her there."

"But the other was burnt—and the other was the greater, was it not?"

"Ah, ciel!" returned the good woman, with round eyes of horror. "Only to think of it! Chopped in pieces and burnt in front of the Porte Royale. And fire did not come down from heaven and burn those wicked heathens. But no doubt a worse fate was reserved for them—that is some consolation."

As she was about to leave us, H. C. slipped a substantial reward into her hand. She looked at it attentively.

"There is no nation like the English," she remarked, with a quaint intonation. "I think they are all milords. A Frenchman would give me five sous, and think that too much. But now," she added, "some of this I have to give to the church, and some I may keep for myself. You have to decide. How much shall I keep, and how much give to the church?"

"Give five sous to the church, and keep the rest," H. C. replied promptly, making me interpreter.

"You are sure you don't mean the other way?" she asked honestly—and a little anxiously.

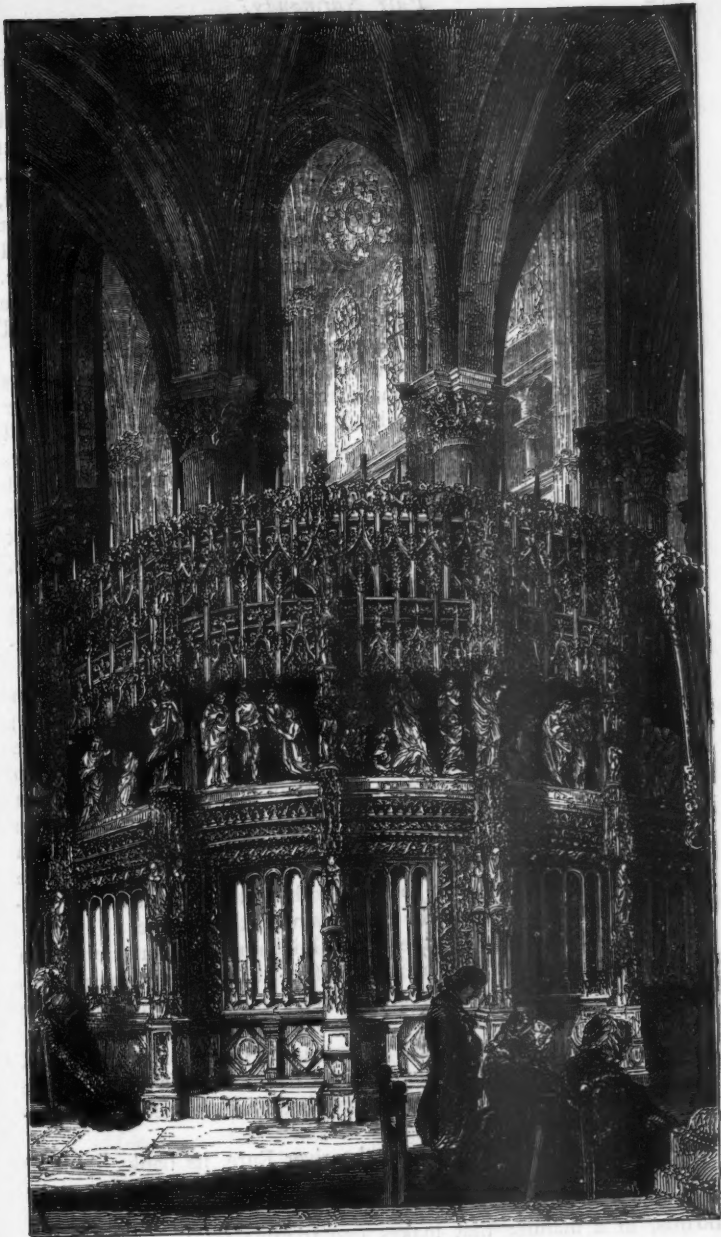
"No," replied H. C. "Our sympathies are all with you, and you have been a charming guide."

She looked delighted. "Ah, what a real gentleman he is," she said to me. "What graceful compliments he pays. Fancy calling a fat old woman like me charming! I haven't been called charming these twenty years." And then she looked at me and added: "What a pity that you don't pay compliments too! But it is not given to everyone to be elegant in his expressions. I daresay monsieur has his merits, but they don't appear. And now," she added, "good-bye; and bon voyage, when you leave. You will not easily find a cathedral to match that of Chartres. Many and many a traveller has told me they never saw its equal."

Her substantial image flitted through the still more substantial doorway, leaving us within the building. It seemed impossible to separate ourselves from all this matchless beauty and grandeur, this high and holy influence. We had it almost to ourselves. Far down a sister of charity was flitting across the nave with noiseless tread and disappeared through a doorway, no doubt on some errand of mercy; administering to the necessities of the body, or quieting the anxieties of the soul.

We too had to go, for we wanted to see something more of the town, and we followed in the wake of our substantial guide. She had disappeared into her little conciergerie, which looked hardly large enough to contain her.

After all, there was great beauty without the cathedral as well as within. A blue, unclouded sky; a sun high and brilliant in the heavens, pouring his flood of golden light upon everything; a clear atmosphere that made us feel as if we were treading upon air.



CHARTRES CATHEDRAL (INTERIOR).

We passed round into the market place. It was crowded with buyers and sellers. Women sat at their stalls presiding over their goods, getting the best price they could for them. Ladies and servants with huge baskets were driving hard bargains, squabbling over sous and centimes, as if the fate of empires depended on them. It was a lively and animated scene. The air seemed full of sunshine, full of the sound of many voices. And such voices! We went about with our small instantaneous camera, creating laughter and confusion. Many of the groups were infinitely funny and picturesque. The women chattered and laughed, and asked questions, and were violently interested, and begged to be taken and immortalised, and were as friendly as if we had known them a hundred years.

The fruit stalls were pictures of beauty, the apples and grapes might have come straight from Olympus. It was a quaint, irregular market place—like everything else in Chartres, where the streets are all narrow and steep and tortuous. Just beyond it we came to a wonderfully picturesque bit of the town. Some ancient houses, gabled and latticed, and ready to fall, as it seemed: all the more interesting for the modern and far less beautiful houses that surrounded them. It was the outskirts of the market, and picturesque carts were lying about, tilted up in the air and reposing on their long shafts until the labours of the day were over, and they conducted empty baskets and full purses and happy housewives back to their country farms, their spotless dairies and lively poultry yards.

Just beyond, we were at the brow of the hill. We looked down upon small flourishing gardens; upon quaint, gabled, red-tiled roofs; one house below another, all placed in delightful irregularity; the sunshine pouring down upon all, warm as summer, throwing deep lights and shadows everywhere: a picture of intense beauty; a wealth of nature and art—for these wonderful old houses are artistic to the last degree, both in form and colouring, and blend with the green trees and the blue sky as if, like the trees, they had sprung from the earth and the hand of man had had nothing to do with them. Beyond all stretched far away the great plains of the Beauce.

At the bottom of the hill the *Porte Guillaume* stood out nobly with its double towers and battlemented roofs. It is the only one remaining of the seven ancient gates of the town: and if man will only spare it, it may well defy time itself. Many old houses are in its neighbourhood, and near it a staircase enclosed in a sort of turret, called *l'escalier de la Reine Berthe*. It is a fragment of a Renaissance building, of old grey wood, very interesting, and crowned with a red-tiled, conical-shaped roof.

At the bottom of the hill runs the river *Eure*, its banks beautiful and picturesque. Washing sheds are conspicuous, and women on their knees are scrubbing and rinsing clothes, and beating them upon boards, in a manner that makes one tremble for the linen. The scene is wonderfully interesting. The banks are green and verdant,

and graceful with waving, overhanging trees. The hill slopes upwards, and the houses dotted about are embowered in trees and verdure. The sunshine glints and sparkles over all and through all. It gives one a feeling of inexpressible happiness, appealing to all that is best within one, holding commune with the soul itself.

Above this beautiful hill, towering skywards, rise the lovely spires of the cathedral, the crown and glory of Chartres; adding beauty and dignity, almost sacredness to the view. Upon these scenes one longs to gaze for ever; the eye is never satisfied with looking, nor the ear with listening to the soothing sounds: the murmuring of the trees, the quiet rippling of the stream. We have left the noisy thoroughfares of the world for its quiet by-ways, where all is pleasantness and all is peace.

We were much taken with Chartres. It left a vivid impression upon us. We longed for more time in which to know it better. It seemed a place in which one might settle for a while: it might be months or years: and live a very happy life. Many spots of France have become colonies for the English: we wonder that Chartres has escaped. It has beautiful surroundings. It is very picturesque in itself. The quiet waters of the Eure lend it their charm. The people seemed very pleasant and primitive, very unspoiled; everything was thoroughly French, and neither sight nor sound of English met the eye or ear. Above all—literally towering above all—is that glorious cathedral in which you may take refuge from the world; gaze upon the wonders and beauties of architecture; lose yourself in dreams of a realm to which we are all hastening, and feel yourself overshadowed by a Divine Presence.



SONNET.

THINK not, hope not thine aim to reach; there are
 Draughts too divine for man—e'en as he sips,
 Their sweetness turns to gall upon his lips.
 Aims reached are worthless. Let thine shine afar,
 As shines o'er night a great and tranquil star
 That grows in beauty as the night wears on.
 Thus over thee may thy bright star look down,
 Nor darkness nor yet cloud its pure light mar.
 Because it burns so high, feel not forlorn,
 Look up through this earth's night of toil and strife;
 Look up! it is the purpose of thy life.
 Look up to Love, to Trust, to Faith—that look
 Is written down in God's eternal book;
 Look up until the coming of the Morn.

JULIA KAVANAGH.

MRS. WALSINGHAM'S BUTTERFLY.

WHEN Mrs. Walsingham lost the diamond butterfly which her husband had given her on the first anniversary of their wedding day, she was naturally much perturbed by her loss.

For two seasons Mrs. Walsingham's butterfly had been an absorbing topic of conversation, whenever pretty Mrs. Walsingham herself happened to be present, and on more than one occasion it had attracted the admiring attention of Royalty.

And now the butterfly was lost! The world—or rather such portion of it as was crowded into the Court Theatre on that disastrous night—had seen the jewelled insect flashing and scintillating in Mrs. Walsingham's pretty brown hair all the time of the performance. But when husband and wife stood in the light of their own hall lamp, the former had uttered an exclamation of dismay.

The butterfly was gone!

Everything had been done that is usual in such cases. The Colonel had looked carefully in the carriage, and had made a thorough examination of each separate fold in his wife's dress. Next morning he had gone off to the theatre and had himself searched the box in which they had been sitting. Then, with commendable prudence, he had cautioned his wife against speaking about her loss, even to the servants, and in the advertisement in which he offered a considerable reward for the recovery of the missing trinket, he had described it as "a jewelled insect (PASTE), valuable to the owner, because specially designed for the Polish wife of Prince Boris Ivanvitch, when she secretly sold the Ivanvitch diamonds to supply her compatriots with funds for a revolutionary uprising."

The Colonel was very pleased with the wording of this advertisement, and read it aloud with a great deal of complacency to his wife.

Mrs. Walsingham was not quite so pleased as her husband. She objected to the slight put upon her cherished possession by describing it as paste, and the aristocratic flavour of its mythical history did not console her.

"Even if I do get it back," she murmured plaintively, "I shan't care to wear it if everybody imagines it is paste."

When, however, the Colonel pointed out that he had referred the public in the first instance to a neighbouring stationer's, and that there was nothing whatever in the advertisement to suggest to a captious world that Mrs. Walsingham's famous butterfly was in question, she was greatly impressed by her husband's cleverness.

That evening the Walsinghams did not dine out, but had a cosy *tête-à-tête* dinner at home, so as to be on the spot if anyone came with news of the stolen jewel.

"Not that I am at all sanguine," said the Colonel, as he thoughtfully peeled a banana. "If the thief had happened to be a stray pickpocket, we might hope to see the 'fly' again. It's more likely, though, that the vagabond who has the thing now had his eye on it for some time past."

But even as he spoke the solemn butler came softly in.

"A person to see you, sir," he announced, deferentially; "he won't give his name, but he says Foster (the stationer) has sent him, and that you will know all about it."

Mrs. Walsingham gave a little start of delight, and the Colonel could scarcely conceal his excitement. "Show him in here, Bailey," he said quickly; "it is someone we are expecting."

The butler withdrew, and in a few seconds ushered in a slight, gentlemanly-looking man, with sharp grey eyes and smooth face.

"Colonel Walsingham, I believe?" began the stranger, taking with easy self-possession the chair which the Colonel indicated at the far end of the table.

The Colonel assented. "You have come, I presume——"

"To give information about some lost property of yours. Precisely."

"Have you found it?" queried Mrs. Walsingham eagerly.

"Well, that's just what I wish to ascertain," said the stranger suavely. "My name is Sawder, Fred Sawder, late of Scotland Yard," he continued, turning to the Colonel. "I'm a detective, and a few hours back I came across a piece of jewelry answering to your description."

"You don't mean to say so?" cried the Colonel excitedly. "Where did you find it?"

"Well, it's a long story," said Mr. Sawder, deliberately, "and brings in matters which are, so to speak, professional secrets at present. But there—the whole account will be in the papers to-morrow, so there's no harm in my telling you."

Both the Colonel and Mrs. Walsingham waited anxiously for him to go on, and after a few seconds' pause, he was graciously pleased to do so, pointedly addressing himself now to Mrs. Walsingham.

"Of course, madam, you have heard of the great Fenton Court robbery?"

Mrs. Walsingham made a motion of assent.

"Er—well—the fact is, to-day I had the good fortune to recover nearly all that stolen jewelry. I have just telegraphed to Mr. Fenton to come up and identify the things to-morrow."

"You have got back the diamonds?"

"Everything, madam, as far as we can tell."

"Tell us all about it," commanded Mrs. Walsingham in her pretty, imperious manner, while her husband's face seconded her request.

"Oh, well, there's not much to tell, ma'am. From information received, we made this morning a raid on the house of a party called Sleepy Jim—sleepy, because he just isn't sleepy, don't you see,

madam? Well, Jim was very easy and careless, and we searched and searched, and not a thing could we find, and at last we gave it up. I was the last to go, and as I went, I heard—for my ears are quick—I heard Jim give the least little bit of a sigh.

"'Come back, men,' I shouted; 'the things *are* here and we won't be such numskulls as to go away without them. Let's have one more look round.' Then it occurred to me that Sleepy Jim had not been sitting on the table for nothing all the time we were turning his place upside down. So I just pushed him and it on one side, kicked over the square of carpet on which the table had been standing, and lo and behold, there were plain signs that the boards had been raised pretty recently.

"We had those boards up again in a jiffy, and there in a deep hole underneath was all the Fenton Court jewelry!"

The detective paused impressively and looked at his two eager listeners, as though challenging their admiration.

"Well, and my wife's butterfly?" asked the Colonel inquiringly.

"I am coming to that, sir. Among the things there were several pins and brooches not included in the list supplied to us at Scotland Yard. I had seen your advertisement, and I thought one of the miscellaneous articles looked very much like your insect. So I just asked Sleepy Jim about it, and he told me that it had been brought to him by a man who had picked it up in Sloane Street, and had been afraid to pawn it. Jim gave him thirty shillings for it; for he saw the diamonds were uncommon good paste, and——"

"But they are nothing of the sort," put in Mrs. Walsingham indignantly; "that was only my husband's idea to call them paste."

"Ah!—That was smart, sir, very smart. You ought to be one of us."

The Colonel looked gratified. "Won't you take a glass of wine, Mr. Sawder?" he said, pushing the decanter over to him.

"Thank you, sir, I don't mind if I do," replied Mr. Sawder, helping himself, and he required little pressing to be induced to repeat the action several times in the course of the next hour.

As a consequence, he soon grew exceedingly communicative and entertained the Colonel with the most thrilling Scotland Yard narratives, all illustrative of the cleverness of rogues and the superior astuteness of detectives.

"It's not that the criminal classes are so especially clever," he remarked, judicially, as he wound up one of his tales; "but the public is so uncommonly soft!"

The Colonel acquiesced. There were a great many fools in the world, he opined; but for his part he had no pity for them. He himself had never been taken in in his life.

"I can quite believe that," said Mr. Sawder, politely; "and if I may make so free, I repeat again you ought to be one of us."

The Colonel did not at all resent Mr. Sawder's freedom. He

was particularly pleased with him and his stories, and in the fulness of his heart he told him he was going down to his club for half-an-hour, and would be charmed to give him a lift.

Mr. Sawder was quite sensible of the Colonel's condescension, and accepted the offer with effusion. Having arranged with Mrs. Walsingham that she was to come down to Scotland Yard the following morning, he went off with the Colonel into the adjoining room, waiting there while this gentleman got ready to go out. This room was a sort of sanctum of Colonel Walsingham, and while he drew on his gloves, he passed in review his collection of fire-arms and other objects of warlike predilection.

The detective seemed a bit of a connoisseur, and his enthusiasm was sufficiently dashed with discriminating knowledge to be particularly pleasing to the Colonel, who actually deigned to bring out from a cavernous cupboard his latest extravagance: to wit, a handsome fur-lined coat he had recently imported from Russia.

"What do you think of that?" he asked.

"Think?" said the detective; "why, that it's not a thing to be left in the hall."

"Rather not," laughed the Colonel; "we keep it in the cupboard in this room. Why, that coat cost me eighty guineas!"

"It looks as if it had," said the detective, warmly, and the Colonel being now ready, the two gentlemen got into their hansom and drove off.

It was scarcely half-an-hour afterwards that there was a hasty pull at the door bell. Mrs. Walsingham was tired and had gone to bed, and the household had followed her example. The butler alone was still up, busy with the silver in his pantry.

"Why, master's forgotten his latch-key!" he cried, hurrying to the door; "it's lucky for me he's come back so early."

But it was not Colonel Walsingham who stood in the doorway—it was Mr. Sawder.

"Sorry to trouble you, my man," he said, speaking very fast, and slipping a shilling into Bailey's hand; "but I left some most important papers behind me, which I was showing to Colonel and Mrs. Walsingham. Will you give them to me?"

"Papers, sir? I haven't seen any."

"But they *must* be here," cried Mr. Sawder, looking very worried. "The fact is—I daresay Mrs. Walsingham told you—these papers have to do with the Fenton Court robbery. We nabbed the man and the swag this afternoon, and the owner's coming up to-morrow. So you see the papers are awfully important."

"Of course, they must be," said the butler, unbending from his solemn dignity on the instant. "Well, I'll just light a taper and see if they are anywhere in the dining-room. I may have overlooked them, but I don't think I have."

The detective followed him into the dining-room and helped in

the search, but no papers were to be found, and he grew more and more anxious.

"I tell you what it is," he began in a vexed tone, "Mrs. Walsingham must have noticed them directly we had gone, and, knowing their importance, must have locked them up somewhere. Now if you can get them for me to-night I'll not forget you."

Bailey's kindness, or his affection for the prospective coin, made him consent, after a little demur, to do what he could.

"I'll go upstairs and call up one of the women servants," he said, "and then send her to ask Mrs. Walsingham. I'll shout up to the under housemaid," he added; "she'll come like winking when she hears my voice."

It took longer to get the housemaid to come down, however, than the butler had anticipated, but at last she had gone off on her embassy, and had brought her mistress's answer to Bailey, patiently waiting on the upper landing.

"I'm sorry, sir," he began, as he descended the last flight of stairs, "but Mrs. Walsingham hasn't seen your papers."

Then he stopped short. The rosy tints fled from his well-nourished face, and a bilious hue took possession of that broad expanse.

The street-door was open, and Mr. Sawder had disappeared.

"A 'do,'" murmured Bailey faintly; "a real old 'do.'"

He thought of his plate, and almost breathed again as he remembered that he had deposited it in the plate-chest and turned the key before he had let the insidious stranger in.

"Depend upon it, he's only gone off with master's umbrella," he said, trying to reassure himself.

The next moment he struck his hands wildly together, and rushed into the Colonel's study. When he came back he was perfectly green. *The Colonel's fur coat, for which he had paid eighty guineas only a few weeks back, was nowhere to be found!*

The officials of Scotland Yard next morning listened with polite attention to Colonel Walsingham's account of what had happened.

"A clean-shaven man, with grey eyes, you say?"

"Yes," was the answer. "He gave the name of Sawder—Fred Sawder."

"Fred Sawder! The man was James Croft, alias Sleepy Jim, the cleverest rogue in the United Kingdom, and as slippery as an eel. I am afraid you will never see your coat again, sir."

And he was right, for the Colonel never did. But one result of his little experience was that he completely changed his views of criminals.

"It is not that the public is so stupid," he was often heard to say; "it is those scamps who are so horribly clever."

SOME RECOLLECTIONS OF AN AGED GENTLEWOMAN.

IT is almost a point of honour with our sex not to reveal our age, and I am not going to reveal mine ; but I may just whisper that I was twelve years old the very month of the very year in which the battle of Waterloo was fought.

I have lately returned from visiting a dear friend in the country whose age is nearly the same as my own. There was a young lady staying at my friend's house who is engaged to be married to a lieutenant in the army. Miss M.'s betrothed was at that time in Egypt engaged in the last desert campaign, and it was painful to witness the anxiety with which the poor girl awaited each morning the arrival of the post. Any hour might bring her tidings that her lover was killed or wounded. But what struck me more than all—being an old-fashioned body—was the terrible celerity, if I may call it so, with which such dread news reaches those who are waiting and watching here in England. For instance, in a newspaper dated, say, the 26th of the month, it is possible to read that on the morning of the 25th a skirmish has taken place among those terrible sand-hills, in which Captain A. and Colour-sergeant B. have been killed and Lieutenant C. wounded. Within twenty-four hours after the event we in England are told what has happened six thousand miles away! When such blows have to fall it is surely more merciful that they should fall swiftly than that the aching hearts at home should not learn for weeks or perhaps months after the event, as used to be the case at one time, that their dear one is lost to them for ever.

These considerations brought freshly to my memory some of the half-forgotten events of my youthful days—of days when the torch of war blazed far and wide over the Continent of Europe, and when Bonaparte was being slowly hemmed in by that belt of fire which he himself had been the first to fan into a flame.

At that time, and for years afterwards, I lived with my parents in a little town in the north of England, which, for this occasion, I will call Muncastle. It was on one of the main lines of road from London to the North, besides being no great distance from two or three important centres of industry. As a consequence, quite a considerable number of coaches passed through it every day, all of which stopped to change horses at the King's Arms, while two of them even stopped to dine—the passengers, not the coaches.

My elder sisters used generally to contrive that their walks into the town should take place when the mail either from the north or south was due, and a great many other ladies did likewise. There was quite a pleasant bustle on the "pavement" at such times, and occasionally

we were so fortunate as to catch a glimpse of the latest London fashions, as some stylishly-dressed lady stepped into or out of the coach just as one or other of us chanced to be passing.

Poor Mr. Popplewick, the landlord of the King's Arms, who, I always felt in my own mind, was intended by Nature for a master of ceremonies at Bath or Cheltenham, so overflowing was he with a sort of pompous affability, did not live more than a year after the opening of the railway to our little town. With the extinction of coaches his occupation was gone. He was worth twenty thousand pounds and might have retired any day, but he just lingered on in the old house and moped slowly to death. Very characteristic were his last words. He had been lying unconscious for several hours, when all at once he started up in bed. "Listen!" he said. "There's Highflyer coming. Ring the bell for John Ostler. Hark! the horn again. She's only three minutes and a half behind time."

With a satisfied smile he sank back on his pillows and never spoke again.

I remember that old Mr. Monkhouse, the confectioner—all the gentlefolk used to deal at Monkhouse's—made his will before venturing to journey to London and back by coach, so impressed was he with the magnitude and manifold dangers of the undertaking he proposed to himself. To be sure, Mr. Monkhouse had been born and bred in Muncastle, and had never been farther than a score miles away from it. But to anyone not in the habit of travelling, a journey to the metropolis in those days was a matter of considerable moment, and was arranged and prepared for a month or two beforehand. When the time came to set out there was quite a solemn leave-taking to be gone through with relatives and friends, and the last words addressed to the intending traveller generally were, "God bless you! and be sure you don't forget to write the moment you arrive." If I recollect rightly, at this distance of time, the London mail was between two and three days on the road, so that ladies, and, indeed, anyone who could not boast of a robust constitution, might well stand in dread of such a journey, more especially when it had to be undertaken in the depth of winter.

I recollect being startled one afternoon, as I was walking out with my mother, by the sudden apparition of a horseman, who came tearing along the highway as though his errand were a matter of life and death. As he flashed past us I could just discern that he carried a leather bag behind him, slung by a strap across his shoulder; also that his heels were armed with long spurs, and that the sides of his horse seemed one mass of blood and lather. I turned to my mother with a shudder.

"It is the King's messenger," she explained, "carrying important despatches from Scotland to London."

"But his poor horse seems ready to drop," I said.

"There will be a fresh horse waiting for him at the King's Arms,

which will carry him as far as B. There he will find another horse, and so, stage by stage, he will make his way to London."

"But surely it cannot be necessary that his horse should be treated so shamefully?"

"One would think not," answered my mother; "but I suppose the messengers have to do the journey in a certain specified time, and it would never do for the King to be kept waiting."

Several times afterwards I saw the King's couriers flash through the town, but never without a feeling of pity for their poor horses. Railways did not come into existence for many years later. When they came we saw the mounted messengers no more.

In those days we had to look to the coaches to bring us all the news. In the height of the war-fever half the population of the town, young and old, rich and poor, used to crowd into the streets to wait for the coming of the London mail. When the guard had good news for us he used to hoist a white flag on the coach just before entering the town, and when the people caught sight of the flag the glad hurrahs that went up to heaven brought tears to my eyes many a time.

But when the guard had no news, or ill news, there was no flag. Then we all waited in a sort of dread expectancy till the guard had distributed the two or three newspapers that he could spare us, for our impatience would not allow us to wait for the regular distribution by the postman. The fortunate few who got possession of the papers never thought of keeping the news to themselves. A ring was formed round them, and they read the news aloud. Frequently they had to read it again and again, till the crowd were satisfied and dispersed. But even when the white flag waved over the coach many a wife's and mother's heart quaked with dread. Nearly one half of the men of a certain regiment belonged to Muncastle and its neighbourhood, and every great victory brought desolation to one or more homes in our little town.

Those were the days of balloting for the army. My uncle William was one who was drawn to serve, but as he was a professional man whose business would have been ruined had he been compelled to leave home, he paid thirty pounds for a substitute and so obtained exemption. It is pleasant to think that his substitute, Sam Perryman, came back from the wars safe and sound, and lived for a dozen years afterwards. It is not unlikely that he might have lived still longer had he not, during his later days, developed such a fondness for old ale. I am afraid that Sam's soldiering spoiled him ever afterwards for honest work. He was a shoemaker by trade, and after he came home from the wars—he really had been in two or three battles—he found himself made so much of, and that so many quarts of ale were to be had without payment, that little by little he got into the habit of spending two-thirds of his time in the chimney-corner of one tap-room or another—wherever, in fact, there was ale to be had for nothing.

For months and months during that terrible time, we expected every day to hear that Bonaparte had landed somewhere on the coast with a hundred thousand men. Even little children caught the prevalent panic. I remember that for a long time my cousin Matilda, after she had said her prayers, and given her good-night kiss, would seize my mother's gown and say imploringly, "Oh! aunty, aunty, do you think that Boney will come to-night?" I recollect that on one occasion she came rushing to my bed all a tremble with fright, and vowing that she was sure Boney had landed because she could hear the firing of big guns a long way off. The night was a stormy one, but it was long before I could persuade her that what she had heard was nothing but the banging of the stable door in the wind.

My cousin Harry was the first who brought to Muncastle the news of the Peace after the battle of Waterloo. There was quite a race among the London coaches which should be first to carry the news down to different parts of the country. The "Swiftsure" left London with a full complement of passengers, but the pace at which it travelled was so alarming that one by one they quitted it at different places on the road, till only Harry, together with driver and guard, were left. The coach was dressed out with flags, and at every town and village through which it passed, newspapers and broadsheets containing the great news were thrown out by Harry and the guard. I shall never forget how they came driving into Muncastle, as though pursued by a troop of demons. The poor horses were white with foam, the driver had lost his hat, and Harry and the guard were sitting on the top playing *God save the King* on two bugles as well as the insecure nature of their seats would allow of their doing, for the coach rocked from side to side as if at any moment it might topple over. I thought the people would have torn Harry to pieces when they got hold of him; it was as though they were drunk with joy and excitement.

There came a day, a little while later, when we saw the reverse of the picture. That was the day when "our regiment," as we proudly called it, returned from the wars. Out of three hundred men who had gone from Muncastle and the neighbouring villages, less than one hundred came back. Less than one hundred! Think of that. Half the town seemed to be in mourning. Nearly everybody had lost either a relative or a friend. The regiment had fresh colours presented to it a little while afterwards. The glorious old colours that had been over half the world and in half-a-hundred battles were hung up, all battered and torn as they were, in the Abbey Church, and there they hang to this day. There is no line in the Prayer Book to which I respond more fervently on Sundays than to that one which says, "*Give peace in our time, O Lord!*"

AN INCIDENT IN MR. LANFORD'S LIFE.

A Sketch.

THERE was no expression of annoyance on Mr. Lanford's face as on the very day of his departure for a trip abroad he received a letter at breakfast from the friend who was to accompany him, saying he was unable to carry out his contract, owing to unavoidable circumstances. Although Percy Gyde was what ladies call the "dearest friend Lanford possessed," this latter gentleman took the news and the prospect of his solitary journey with the greatest composure.

His meal ended, he proceeded to pack and, an hour later, unlike the other sex, to whom packing is almost as exhaustive a process as shopping, had finished just as Mrs. Beach, his laundress, entered his chambers.

After Lanford had paid and tipped her, the lady asked: "Are you going to leave all them letters about, sir?"

"Yes, Mrs. Beach," returned the gentleman, coolly and significantly. "I have locked up all my letters that I prefer not to have read. These are chiefly bills, and as they are mostly paid, it don't much matter who sees them."

Mrs. Beach was pleased to consider Lanford as a "funny" man, and those remarks of his which she did not wish to understand were only part of his humour.

Lanford continued from his bedroom, where he was rummaging about:

"I must apologise for the antiquity of the collars I am leaving behind, Mrs. Beach. I hope, however, the shape will atone in your son's eyes for this little defect; as for my ties and socks, well, it is unnecessary to tell you and your family to make yourselves quite at home with regard to them. It really is very forgetful of me not to have had my piano tuned—perhaps, however, you would ask Miss Beach not to play her distracting airs at eleven o'clock at night, as some of those disagreeable fellows underneath complained that it interfered with their work last time—they did remark that there must have been something wrong with the loud pedal—but what can you expect of barristers?"

Mrs. Beach remarked: "Lor, sir! how you do go on," and entering his chamber, added: "You are not looking well, sir; perhaps this little trip abroad will do you good," after which she proceeded to make a tremendous bustle and shaking-up, and drove Lanford into the other apartments, where he relapsed into an arm-chair with a pipe.

He was an habitual smoker, and keenly appreciated the habit, but no expression of relaxation came into his handsome, melancholy

face as he sat on, doing nothing. As a rule men's faces are less expressive than women's, possibly owing to the greater necessity for self-control; and beyond a settled melancholy, almost sadness, about his dark eyes, and rather cynical mouth, you would not have gathered a very correct notion of the man, Gilbert Lanford, from his exterior. He was one of those men who are scarcely ever understood by other men, owing to the thick mark of pride and cynicism which conceals the real sensitive, rather sentimental self. Lanford was usually labelled, even by his most intimate friends, as a rather selfish, extremely hard headed, able and witty individual; and perhaps out of the whole number of them not one dreamt of the other side of his being.

He was one of those unfortunate men who possess a temperament—only pardonable in a genius—which from its very nature prevents its owner from having any permanent happiness.

That is to say, he had that vague, restless kind of nature—scarcely ever to be found in the successful practical man, or in the pure idealist or artist: but in the man whose sentimental and poetic side is as developed as his logical faculty.

One saw no particular reason (unless you were his doctor, and knew how much physical considerations influenced him mentally) to pity a man in the prime of life who was blessed with an abundance of money, who had already achieved a name amongst the men of letters of his day, and who might have been, had he chosen, a favourite with men and women.

Lanford himself hardly knew why life appeared to him so incomprehensible and unsatisfactory a thing. He could not even account for it on the score of a love disappointment. Many women had cared for him, but up to his thirty-fourth year they all appeared to him more or less charming in any state but as his wife—indeed, the woman who should satisfy Mr. Lanford's delicate, refined tastes, and at the same time his desire for originality and freshness, had not yet appeared.

Mrs. Beach, seeing him in what she phrased one of his "gloomy moods" (being a woman, she never could understand the possibility of a man remaining quiescent for half an hour, doing nothing, and not being intensely miserable), tried to cheer him up by remarking how his friends would miss him.

Lanford smiled rather sardonically, and said:

"Ah, that *is* a pleasing reflection, Mrs. Beach; I believe I *do* give rather good dinners; and so far as wine and cigars are concerned, my departure will no doubt plunge all my dear friends in grief—it would be more considerate of me to lay in a stock of both and place them at their disposal—this possibly might console them."

But after the manner of her sex, Mrs. Beach was absorbed in some domestic detail, and merely remarked "What, sir?" when Lanford came to an end, at which the man groaned; remarked it

was too hot to repeat his valuable utterances, and went to Park Lane to bid his mother and sisters adieu.

As to Lanford's female belongings, the correct word to apply to them is that elastic one "charming"—which in this case really expresses everything, and which, to a discerning person, may account for the reason that Lanford's best self—if he possessed one—never appeared in the artificial atmosphere of his mother's house.

"My dear boy," remarked his mother, an exceedingly handsome lady, whose virtues did not equal her age, which, by the bye, was most successfully concealed: "How ill you look—I am so glad you are going off, and that Mr. Gyde, who is so nice and lively, is going with you."

"Cut short your raptures, my dear mother," said her son. "Gyde is not going."

"Not going!—Well, Bertie, you don't propose to go alone?"

"Certainly," returned Gilbert, composedly; "and on the whole there are great disadvantages in having a travelling companion, one has to preserve a certain amount of decent restraint in taking the best of everything, which is a bore."

"Bertie, I never knew anyone like you. I thought you were fond of Mr. Gyde—you ought to be—he is very fond of you."

Her son shrugged his shoulders.

"I leave all these affecting emotions to you and the girls, my dear mother."

This was not a nice speech from a son to a mother, above all when the mother had the antecedents of Mrs. Lanford; but bitter little speeches such as these—the sting of which lay in the knowledge of the two persons alone concerned—were not very uncommon with Gilbert in the family circle; and it is not particularly wonderful that neither his mother nor his beautiful sisters bore much affection for him. They, however, ascribed one virtue to Gilbert, that of "reliableness," which, owing to their volatility, was often called into requisition.

II.

It cannot be asserted with any veracity that Lanford rendered himself generally attractive whilst pursuing his journey to Brussels. On board, after asking himself half-a-dozen times why he had come, he settled himself in gloomy silence at as great a distance as was possible from the rest of his compatriots. A really beautiful young lady, with cheeks as pink as the most superior paint could produce, and fine locks of the most approved bronze colour, surveyed his pale, handsome face, with its lustrous dark eyes, with a good deal of approval, and made every advance consistent with the propriety of a British maiden; but all to no effect—Lanford, stupidly preferring nature to art, puffed away stolidly and unconcernedly.

An altogether harmless young man, "believing," as he afterwards informed his friends, "that the cad was a gentleman," remarked that it was "an uncommonly fine night;" as, however, the cad in question

received the statement with a quiet little stare, the possible conversation dropped, and the young man returned to his more genial companion, where Mr. Lanford's haughty deportment drew forth some uncomplimentary comments—a few of which floated to his ear, but did not in any way discompose him. He could not for the life of him help feeling, not so much contempt as distaste, for these young men, all of whom he admitted led, no doubt, much more useful lives than he, but whose conversation on the subject of racing and the drama bored him unutterably.

Unfortunately, if you have lived to the age of five-and-thirty, and in a fastidious, refined kind of way gratified yourself in every particular, it is possible most things will seem more or less boring—as was indeed the case with Mrs. Lanford's son. It is a little difficult to understand how Lanford could conceive that a tour abroad—which was about his twentieth experience—could remedy a weariness which was an integral part of himself.

After the fascinating young lady and her companion had retreated from the Lanford assault, Gilbert found himself alone at the upper end of the boat for a few moments. He had no sooner misanthropically congratulated himself on this fact than an elderly man, who walked in an exceedingly feeble manner, seated himself close beside him, and attempted to twist some rugs about his legs, which he succeeded in doing after a good many clumsy efforts.

His face was striking enough to arrest even Gilbert's listless attention. It was one of those clearly-cut, delicate faces often seen in elderly men of great intellectuality, without a trace of hair on it to mar the beauty of feature. In this case the tremulousness of the mouth and the softness of the mild blue eyes forewarned you not to expect great moral or mental strength; but you would have guessed at the first shot that this fine old head, with its thick, curling grey hair, belonged to a painter, or a poet, or a musician. Owing to his reserve—partly constitutional, partly cultivated—it is probable that Gilbert would have contented himself with a momentary curiosity as to whom the old man could be had he not seen him press his hands to his breast as if in acute pain. Even then Gilbert hesitated, having the strongest objection himself to be spoken to by a stranger; but the old man looked at him in a helpless kind of manner which Gilbert, not being exactly a brute, felt he could not resist. He went to his side, and said courteously:

"I am afraid you are ill. Can I do anything for you?"

The old man took his hand tremblingly, and murmured his regret for troubling him.

"If the gentleman would be so good as to fetch him a little brandy."

Gilbert immediately handed him his own flask, and a few minutes later the old gentleman was well enough to accept a cigar. A little desultory conversation followed, in the midst of which Gilbert said:

"I am afraid you are hardly in a fit state to travel. Do you intend remaining in Brussels?"

"No, no!" said the old man eagerly. "My daughter is expecting me—waiting for me at Dresden."

Gilbert said nothing—but the elder man apparently did not find him unsympathetic, for he said, speaking with a nervous eagerness:

"Ah, sir—I feel as if I should like to tell you—you are not like most young gentlemen. I read something most noble in your countenance." And he looked at Gilbert's sad dark face; at which the younger man smiled a little and said, gently touched by something child-like in the soft white hair and gentle blue eyes:

"If I can do anything for you—I am at your service. I believe I am right in thinking this is your first sea-voyage?"

"My first—yes," and he shrugged his shoulders. "You see I am scarcely fit for it—but I am going to fetch my daughter. Oh, sir, you do not know the joy of what this meeting will be to us—a father separated from his only daughter for fifteen years—fifteen years," he repeated mournfully.

Gilbert had too fine a stock of tact to say anything—and the old man went on: "You are beginning life—I am nearly at the end—but I feel drawn to you—perhaps because I feel so joyful—my dear little Jenny!"

Doubts as to the sanity of the elderly stranger began to creep over Gilbert's cautious mind, and he hazarded a remark:

"You have been separated from your daughter for fifteen years?" He really felt not the slightest interest in the answer—but the evident illness and loneliness of the old man disposed him to make some test of his saneness.

"Fifteen years ago, when little Jenny was a child, she was taken from me and her poor mother. You see, sir, it seems unnatural for a parent to part with one of his children, but if you only knew the circumstances—if you only knew the circumstances, sir." There was no mistaking the intense desire on the part of the old man to relate the "circumstances."

With an inward groan, and not a little surprise at his own goodness, Gilbert resigned himself to the recital and said:

"I am sure circumstances may arise in which such a course might be necessary."

"Yes, sir, that's what I've said to myself over and over again. You see, I made a mistake in the beginning—we were young and thoughtless, both of us—and we ran away. Heaven knows we both regretted it; but she, poor thing, suffered most. Jenny's mother—I mean. What she saw in me I never could make out. She a beauty and a great lady, the daughter of a peer, and I nothing but a poor organist; but I believe in those days," drawing up his old head proudly, "five-and-twenty years ago, I was as handsome a fellow as you could see."

Gilbert remarked there was every evidence of the fact still remaining; but he concealed his surprise that the old man whom he had judged sixty-five must be more than ten, perhaps fifteen, years younger. The old man went on in a half apologetic kind of tone, more as if he were relating the story to satisfy himself:

"Yes, there's no doubt I was a handsome fellow—but—" here his head drooped, and he went on in a piteous tone—"that doesn't satisfy a woman for long—and you can't blame her—brought up to every luxury—there was no one to blame but me——" his self-reproaching tone died to a whisper.

Gilbert pressed the old man's hand underneath the rug; he did not dare to hazard a remark, as he imagined the peer's daughter had disgraced herself.

When he raised his head he said humbly: "Perhaps I'm troubling you, sir?"

"Not in the least," returned Lanford; "only don't tell me if it distresses you."

"Ah, it's all gone now—she never forgave me for bringing her to poverty. God knows I did my best, and was punished enough. Not a farthing would her mother give us, even when the five boys were living, and I only earning fifteen shillings a week as an organist on Sundays at the village church. Then—she died—died without forgiving me—a few months after little Geneviève was born. And then my five boys died one after another—Oh, I was punished——"

The pathetic figure of the old man did not prevent Gilbert from experiencing a feeling of embarrassment as he saw that the old man's emotion was being observed. To divert him from his painful reminiscences, he asked: "And the little girl—what became of her?"

"There I did wrong again," returned the old man with his touching humility. "Her grandmother consented to take her on condition I gave up all claim to her. Before you judge me, sir, remember I was desperately poor and had five strong boys to provide for—and her mother had wished it——"

"And now, I suppose, Miss Jenny wants to see you?"

An almost painful expression of expectant happiness swept over the old man's face. All the unhappy memories of the past were forgotten as he said, with a joyful ring in his voice: "No, her grandmother died last week, and, thank God, relented before she died. She consented that Jenny, whom she had up to now forbidden to hold any intercourse with me, should have her choice of staying with me for six months. I wrote to my dear little girl—and I am on my way to her. Isn't it good of her? because you see she is surrounded by all these aristocratic relatives of her mother's, who look down on me—not without good reason——"

Gilbert cut short the self-depreciation that he saw coming.

"And at the end of the six months," he asked, "where is she going?"

The old man clasped his hands nervously.

"Oh, I hope she will stay with me for the few remaining years of my life! I will make her so happy! And do you think it would be very dull for a young girl with an old man? I have saved up money for her, and she can have pictures and dresses as she likes. I have made a fair name as a composer. Perhaps, sir," he said modestly, "you have heard of Stanfield?"

Whether Gilbert had or not, he affirmed that he had; and a few moments later the old man sank into a soothed slumber.

When Gilbert found himself really going out of his way to look after old Stanfield, the humour of the situation began to strike him; and generous actions being somewhat rare with him, he began to feel a little ashamed of himself. Nothing could have tended to more greatly embarrass him than to have his kindliness to the old man made known. When in Brussels, where they remained several days, owing to the feeble condition of Stanfield, he met some friends. He was in as mortal terror as if he were afraid of the discovery of some mean action that they should find out his humble friend. To interest himself actively in another's welfare, and put himself to inconvenience on another's behalf, was certainly rather out of keeping with the tenour of his life.

But there was a certain pathetic loneliness in old Stanfield which had touched that particular sentiment in Gilbert which few people ever succeeded in doing. Added to which he had a certain languid curiosity in seeing the finale of the little affair in which he was playing a part; and at times there rose within his breast a certain uneasy foreboding as to whether there might not be disappointment in store for the old man. And lastly, no man with a drop of human blood in his veins could be insensible to the clinging affection which seemed to be growing up in the lonely old man for himself. True, Gilbert knew it was soon to be transferred, with a thousand times more force, to the adored Jenny; but for the present it was pleasant even to a man like Lanford, who professed to despise the softer emotions.

Once he asked Stanfield, who was just recovering from one of his painful heart attacks, whether it would not be better to fetch Miss Stanfield to Brussels; but the old man had an incorrigible objection to appearing before his daughter as an invalid.

"It would not do," he said a little excitedly, "for her to think she would have to nurse her father. It is I who will protect and take care of my Jenny."

And for the thousandth time he would describe the meeting, her features, which must be like her mother's—"the most beautiful woman in the county, sir"—to all of which Lanford would listen patiently, with a little feeling of surprise at the intensity of the old man's love, and an irrepressible sigh of regret that no father or mother had ever felt this for him.

In a few days Mr. Stanfield was so much better that he was able to resume his journey; and Gilbert, feeling he would be somewhat *de trop*, in Jenny's eyes at least, parted with him, promising to visit Dresden a week later, before the Stanfields left for London. Lanford then pursued his journey to Homburg; and as the softer emotions appeared to have departed with old Stanfield, and he resumed his ordinary semi-cynical, semi-bitter attitude towards life and men, he is not a pleasant companion, although he is too well-bred to evince these characteristics in an unpleasant manner. He carried away with him the impression of the old man's beautiful face—a little worn and wistful, but radiantly joyful and satisfied in the coming re-union.

III.

A WEEK later, after an unsatisfactory time, Gilbert arrived at Dresden. Thanks to his aristocratic bearing and manner, he always received prompt attention, no matter how other Englishmen fared; and ten minutes after his arrival in Dresden his luggage and he himself were deposited in the same hotel as the Stanfields; and his handsome pale face and good clothes having made an impression, as usual, on the softer sex, he was within half-an-hour provided with the best dinner Dresden could boast. Having finally dined, smoked and, to the surprise of the natives, had a bath, he requested the waiter to take up his card to Mr. Stanfield. The man returned, saying Mr. Stanfield was ill in bed, but if Mr. Lanford would be good enough to come up, he would be greatly pleased to see him.

Gilbert, with the memory of the old man's radiant brightness a week ago, was shocked at the change for the worse in his appearance. That look of renewed if fictitious youth had absolutely disappeared; and the furrowed lines, mementos of years of trouble and suffering, now stood out more clearly than ever, marking also the extreme delicacy and purity of the marble face. Old Stanfield was sitting propped up with pillows; and there were evidences of feminine attentions in the delicate arrangements round his bedside, especially evinced in a dish of roses at his side.

His blue eyes brightened as Gilbert approached the bed, and he stretched out his beautiful attenuated hand with a feverish pleasure, and busied himself with the nervous anxiety of sick elderly persons to make room for Gilbert to sit.

In the midst of this there was a slight and gentle rustle, and Miss Stanfield, with a glass of something in her hand, stood at her father's bedside.

"This is Mr. Lanford, Jenny, my dear, the gentleman of whom I spoke to you—my daughter, Mr Lanford," and the old man sank back exhausted.

Gilbert was vaguely conscious that there was something wrong. Where was all the pride and joy of the tone in which he had last spoken of his beloved Jenny? He glanced at the girl in something

like anger. She was a beautiful young creature, and curiously enough, in her eyes, which were long and dark, and quite unlike her father's in colour and shape, there was the same expression of wistful appeal. Gilbert could not fail to notice the air of restraint with which she ministered to her father, and, although he was not prone to rash judgments, the thought, "rather heartless," rose within him. Both men followed her slight figure and gracious face with pleasure; but in the father's glance there was an indefinable kind of sad disappointment.

Miss Stanfield turning round a little suddenly caught her father's expression, and with a slight accession of colour walked to the bedside and kissed the old man, who lay very serene.

He received his daughter's caress rather passively, and inquired absently whether Dr. Schweitz had called whilst he was asleep.

"No, dear—don't you remember we said we would only send for him if you were not so well? You don't feel worse, do you?"

"No, not worse. Jenny, my dear, you look pale; had you not better go for a turn?"

"Yes, dear," and the daughter gave a little sigh. "I suppose there is nothing I can do for you?"

Some impulse caused her to bend down again and press her lips to the pallid, sunken cheeks—and then she disappeared.

Gilbert sat by the bedside for a few moments in painful silence. He scarcely knew how to commence conversation on any safe subject. At last he made a few trivial remarks about his own trip, and seeing the old man sinking into a doze, prepared to leave the room, with the intention of interviewing the doctor.

The loosening grasp of his fingers roused the old man, who had been only lost in memories, and not asleep.

His blue eyes, a little dim, but sweet and placid as ever, fixed themselves on Gilbert's dark, melancholy face, and he murmured gently:

"You understand—it was not what I expected? It is just the crowning disappointment. Why could I not have a little joy before the grave? I wish—" he tried weakly to control his quiet sobs—"I wish I had died on board. I might have known—it has always been the same all through."

In his agitation he raised himself into a sitting position, and drooped his weary head on to Gilbert's shoulder.

For a few moments there was calm stillness, and Gilbert, looking down on his flushed, worn face, and hearing his heavy breathing, hoped he would sleep.

Presently he raised his head with an irritable sigh, and said, sadly: "If only anyone had ever loved me; I did so want to be loved. I could not help it—there seemed to be a sort of yearning here"—placing his hand on his heart—"which never was satisfied. First her—then the boys—and now—oh, Jenny, if you only *could* have loved me. Ah, me!—well, it is nearly over now, and"—with a

weary sigh—"I am not sorry. I hope"—he took Gilbert's hand in his own trembling ones, and looked into his impassive face—"your life, which is just beginning, will be different from mine; do not expect too much; above all, do not expect too much love."

He paused for a second, and Gilbert noticing his weakness suggested he should try and sleep, but the old man went on murmuring with a tender inflection in his voice, and his tired blue eyes wandering about the room: "You must not think Jenny was to blame; it was not her fault that she had no love for her father; but, alas, it seems everything has gone wrong."

Gilbert determined not to let him talk any more, and, after giving him some medicine, said: "I must go now, but would you like me to come up again later?"

Stanfield's worn features lighted up, and he pressed the young man's hand, saying, "I am so tired."

Gilbert went down the stairs more sorry and grieved for the old man than he could have believed it possible. He had no sooner reached the gardens than a feminine figure approached him, and Miss Stanfield said, with a deprecating, yet anxious air:

"Do you think papa so very ill?—Oh, I am sorry about it all."

She paused, and then went on speaking very rapidly and with a sort of girlish excitement, as if she were trying hard not to cry:

"You see, I had not seen papa since I was a baby, and of course I could not feel any deep love for him. If your father is a complete stranger to you, it is not likely you can look upon him as other girls do their fathers. Yet I have longed to see him, but somehow it was always put off and off, and lately, since I knew I was going to see him, I could only feel excitement and curiosity, and I never thought; I never imagined, he was thinking so much of me. Then when we met, he was so hurt and wounded, when he found that I——"

She stopped short and Gilbert saw her beautiful eyes were heavy with tears. For one selfish moment he wished he were out of the way of all these emotions; the next he was telling her of the old man's hopes and the past, with its disappointment and sorrows. He could not help admitting that there really was a good deal of justice in what the girl said; but along with this came a strong sense of the father's vivid disappointment and destruction of his edifice of joy. It was this that impelled him to speak, although he would much rather have been silent. His manner was extremely diffident and unassuming.

"Of course I understand you could not feel what he does; he forgets that, unfortunate as it is, he has never come into your life at all; but I should think that it would be well to practise a little mild deception, and be as demonstratively affectionate as you can. I should say he was the sort of man very much in need of outward affection."

There was a certain delicacy about his tone and words very

pleasing to the young girl, who was exceedingly susceptible to outside influences. She turned her lovely face with its pale curves and deep, wistful eyes upon him, and said, regretfully :

"Oh, I ought to have thought about this—but you do not know what it is not to have any of your really own people. Of course my grandmother was very kind, and I am fond of my uncles ; but"—she shrugged her fair shoulders—"they would have strongly objected to the display of any affectionate emotions. Poor dear papa—oh, Mr. Lanford, somehow I never realised till this moment what a terribly lonely life he must have had. But I will be good to him. I'll just live for him—I am so grateful to you for having been so kind and attentive to him. I must go and pet him a little—I'm determined he shall be happy at last."

Gilbert smiled at her impetuosity, and was a little surprised at the brightness of her face, which a few moments before he had thought exquisitely lovely but a trifle sad and unhappy. Years afterwards, when he had learnt to know it and love it as life's best treasure, he could accurately recall it at that moment. He followed her leisurely, thinking it would be best for her to meet her father alone. At the threshold he paused. There was a low, helpless cry, and the next moment he had entered, in time to catch Jenny's swaying form in his arms and to hear that most hopeless of all human expressions :

"Too late !"

But the old man lay, unheeding of his beloved Jenny's tears, in that calm stillness which no buffetings or storms can break.

FRANCES H. LOW.



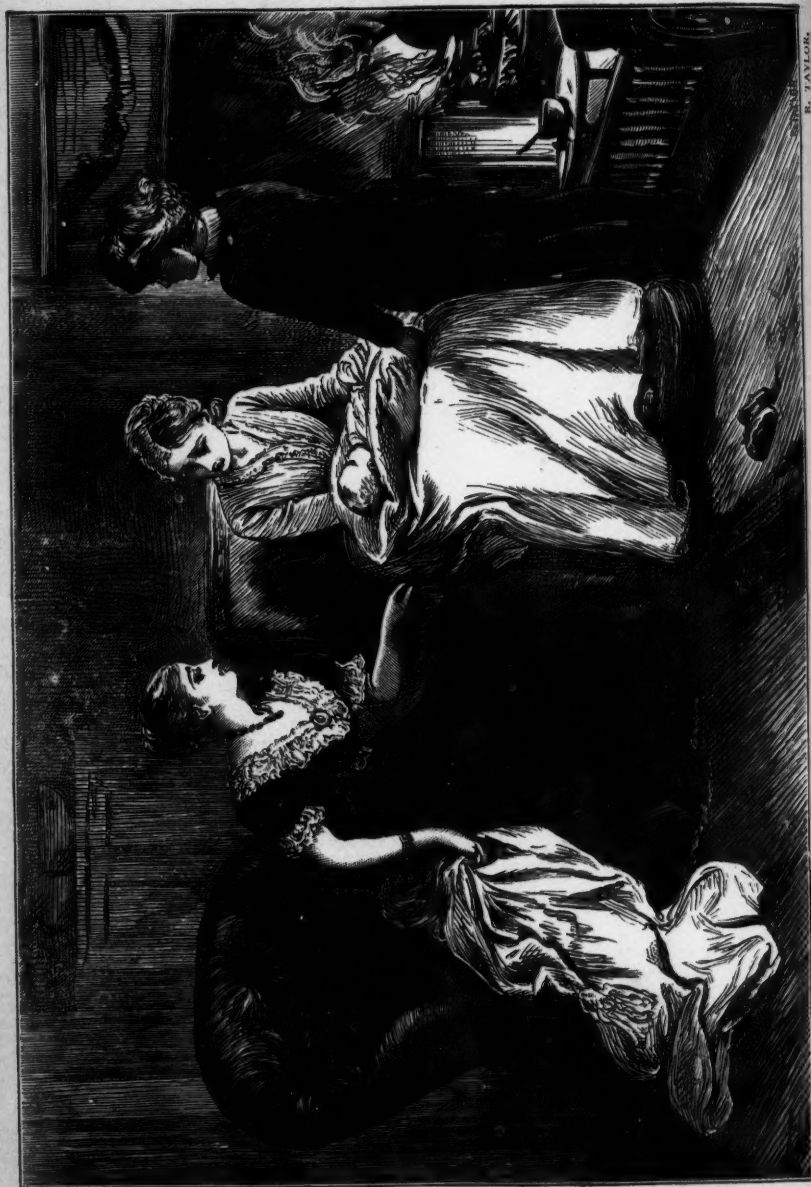
STAR WORSHIP.

A FAIR-HAIRED child, with steadfast, dark-fringed eyes,
 And dainty limbs that moved with supple grace,
 Her evening prayer just ended, with a smile
 And coaxing words, looked in her mother's face :
 " Nay, mother, leave the curtains for to-night—
 At least, till I'm asleep; for don't you see,
 Right up amidst the blue, a tiny star?
 I love it, and I think it smiles at me."

Years after, in a mansion further south,
 Moved a pale woman with soft, tender eyes,
 And just that quiet droop about the mouth
 Wherein so much of life's sad pathos lies.
 Both wealth and rank had wooed her; but to all
 She answered " Nay," with such soft, sweet address,
 Not one in sorrow as they turned away
 But prayed " God bless her " for her graciousness.
 'Twas said of her by one both true and good,
 Whose name was counted great amongst his kind :
 " She is the purest type of womanhood
 Heart could desire, or wisdom hope to find.
 Yet lacks she one thing— (As a faithful friend,
 How true and loyal she can be all own)—
 Add tender *Wife* and *Mother*, then indeed
 Grace unto grace is added, crown to crown."

Years after, in a city's vast hotel,
 This man lay sick to death : strange hands to tend,
 All alien faces watching where he lay,
 Unknown, unknowing, and without a friend ;
 Then, with a grave, calm look about the mouth,
 But prayer to God to check her heart's wild beat,
 She with soft step into that darkened room
 Came like a sunbeam from the narrow street.
 And so she nursed him, all unconscious, till
 The tired eyes ope'd and looked at her one day :
 One long glad look ere heart and pulse grew still,
 And death had closed the weary lids for aye.
 And tho' her faith had taught her for the dead
 (Our nearest and our dearest) prayers are vain :
 Yet ever, when " Our Father " had been said,
 " God bless him " on the Amen softly came.
 Until God's angel, with a pitying touch,
 Sealed the sad lips ere those three words were o'er;
 And one " God bless — " was etched face to face,
 Hand clasped in hand upon a love-lit shore ;
 While darker grew the chamber; for death's wing
 In silent majesty filled all the place,
 Save where a curtain parted, and a star
 Looked down in sorrow on the poor dead face.





M. ELLEN STAYES.
IT WAS A STRANGE MEETING, THE TWO SISTERS COMING TOGETHER, IN THAT UNEXPECTED MANNER.
R. TAYLOR.